

The emergence of a common enemy helped Wallace and Bruce to unite Highlander, Islander, and Lowlander, Pict, Gael, Scot and Borderer. They would as soon have fought each other, but it was by setting aside their many differences and uniting that they were to achieve greatness. Around the world there has been a similar experience, with neighbour fighting neighbour or neighbouring country fighting neighbouring country. Unite to achieve greatness. Unity in diversity.

However reluctantly, it has been the human experience that banding together in ever larger groups, and solving the problems associated with verbal and written language, currency, economics and law, has been necessary for the establishment of peace, economic stability, economy of scale, and effective functioning. The people of the Province of Ontario can go to bed at night comforted by the thought that the Province of Manitoba will not invade in the night. In fact, they do not give it a thought. The same is true of the Scottish counties of Lothian and Lanark. It was not always this way. If we do not value this achievement, we may lose it one day in political rhetoric. There is always a good reason to fight. If there is one lesson to be learned from history it is that there is a better reason to unite.

Man is the supreme talisman. -- Bahá'u'lláh

Down through the ages mankind has been advancing in a series of progressions. There have been backward steps in the journey, inevitably, but we have moved from families of hunter gatherers to septs of farmers and herders, to clans, to tribes, to countries, to nations. What remains is for us to learn how to live in harmony in one world.

Some say that a global society is not possible. Not possible? The Romans had a global society two thousand years ago. It is inevitable. The only thing in doubt is the form it will take.

Saint Patrick, William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, and Rob Roy MacGregor. What do they have in common? All were heroes, all are dead. They would have been dead anyway. Why we remember them is the way they lived and the way they died. That makes them memorable.

All faced huge odds without yielding. All succeeded in gaining major victories that left their part of

the world a better place. Succeeding generations were given a standard to strive to live up to.

There are many cynical people in the world today who are very intelligent. Not much has ever been achieved by cynical people. The heroes of this story were all believers. All had a vision which they would not yield, and for which they were willing to pay the ultimate price.

The Birth of Scotland

Celts; Romans; Britons; Picts

This is the story of a road. For centuries people travelled it on their journey to fame or obscurity.

Some of these people were of great importance in the history of Scotland and it is of them that I write. I can only provide a glimpse of them and the significant events on which they expended their lives. They will pass through the story fleetingly as they once passed the site of my home, offering a glimpse of history to those who had the eyes to see.

I grew up surrounded by history. I lived in the village of Duntocher, ten miles to the Northwest of Glasgow, Scotland. In the days when few people had automobiles, ten miles seemed a considerable distance.

The ancient beech trees are gone now. When I was a boy looking out of my bedroom window, they stood tall and green in the foreground. The trees were about three hundred years old, judging by the rings on their trunks, although it was hard to count them. During World War II, when a winter storm brought down one of these giants, the neighbours raced to it with handsaw and axe since coal was in short supply and the winters, cold and damp.

Immediately beyond these guardian barrier trees was a narrow road, more of a trail, running East and West, constructed of earth and stones. It appeared from beneath more modern paved roads then disappeared a few miles later, providing a base for more modern roads. I was to discover that it had been, in ancient times, the Old Drovers Road, along which the black cattle from the Highlands of Scotland were driven to markets in Dumbarton on the West Coast and to Stirling, possibly on to Edinburgh on the East Coast.

Beyond the road was a farmers field, then the land rose into the Old Kilpatrick Hills, climbing to a height of eighteen hundred feet above sea level and forming the northern border of the once fertile but now industrial valley which surrounds the River Clyde.

As a boy I always felt a tingle of excitement when from my bedroom window I looked North towards the Old Kilpatrick Hills. I could sense adventures in the making. Once over the rim of these hills I could be in a wilderness and have the world to myself. From the hills, a clear view was provided of the River Clyde and the ocean going ships that travelled on it to and from Glasgow. The largest and most famous of passenger ships in the magic era of sea travel were built and launched on this narrow river, the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth each weighing over 80,000 tons and each the size of a football field. During World War Two these ships made an enormous contribution, travelling from the USA to Scotland carrying 18,000 troops at a time, with no convoy escort, using speed alone to avoid German submarines. The ships were packed so full that the men had to sleep in shifts.

In the 1970's it was decided to use the farmers field for a housing development. Before it was readied for construction, archaeologists were allowed to excavate the area and many ancient artifacts were found in their trenches. Beneath the farmers field, sunk beneath the soil of ages, was the remains of a great wall running parallel to the road. It was a defensive wall built by the Romans during their occupation of the British Isles.

Romantic as the Old Drovers Road may seem, it had a more ancient origin. It has witnessed history unfold. In the 1930's it was decided to build a modern road on part of this route. When excavations began they discovered that an excellent road already existed, buried under the Drovers Road. It, too, was built by the Romans. Historians referred to it as the Military Way and it ran right across Scotland. The Romans had a supply depot in the Firth of Clyde at Dumbarton. The cattle drovers of a later period were to add a section to the road to connect the town of Stirling.

Since the entire story revolves around this road I decided to entitle it THE ROAD.

THE ICE AGE AND THE EARLIEST HUMANS

There was likely an early people, hunter gatherers, in Scotland before the ice age, going back possibly to 44,000 years ago, but not much is known of them. Animals living at this time included mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, and reindeer, none of which survived the ice age. A large number of reindeer antler segments were found in a cave in Scotland and since the reindeer or other animals were not likely to be responsible for placing them there, it is thought that they were there as a result of human activity, perhaps for making tools. At that time the land now known as the British Isles was not even an island. Almost the entire East Coast of England was not a coast at all, but was connected to Europe. The shallow area of the North Sea known as The Wash was a land bridge.

The last glaciation period started in Scotland about 25,000 years ago, reaching a climax about 18,000 years ago when the whole country was buried deeply with ice up to one kilometre thick. It was not possible for human life to exist at this time. With the coming of the ice and cold the earliest inhabitants had to leave, seeking a warmer climate and following the animals which provided them with food and clothing. Many human Mesolithic sites are now under the North Sea. After a false warming trend 12,000 years ago, the environment finally warmed up and became quite hospitable about 9,000 years ago. A great deal of sea water was taken up in making the ice. The Northwest of the British Isles was (and still is) rising, the Southeast sinking. The weight of ice on the land forced the sea bed up, above the lowered sea level. As the ice melted, the sea rose and the land bridge disappeared about 8,000 years ago. The sea was then about 33 feet higher than it is today. The coastline of Scotland would be vastly different than present.

The earliest human settlement site in Scotland that has yet been discovered is on the Island of Rum, off the West coast. About 9,000 years ago a group of hunter gatherers lived at the head of a sheltered loch here. About 8,000 years ago humans were living on Islands Arran, Islay, Jura, Alva, and in the Oban area.

ORIGINAL ROADSITE

Most defensive walls follow a natural, fairly flat route, avoiding major obstacles such as mountains and bodies of water, but taking advantage of high ground for forts, lookout points, and signal hills.

Before Roman times, trails existed along parts of the route that the Romans were to use. For many centuries the area was heavily wooded; after the land recovered from the last ice age, it supported elk, wild cattle, beaver, lynx, wolves, bear and wild boar, all of which are now extinct in Scotland.

At one time these trails were used by the early inhabitants to get the produce of field and forest to markets and to seaports.

PRE-ROMAN SCOTLAND: THE CELTS

The Celts were tall and fair people, hunter-gatherers; highly developed in metalworking, artistic, poetic, fierce and brave fighters with a strong storytelling tradition. Valiant deeds and heroes were extolled over centuries. The storyteller or bard had a most honoured and sometimes mystic role in the society. In fact "bard" is a Celtic word. Beginning about five centuries BC, various Celtic tribes occupied the British Isles, the Gaels and Scots in Ireland, Britons in England and the Picts in Scotland. All spoke somewhat different languages but all were Celtic people.

The Celts seem to have originated before 700 B.C. in middle Europe, between the River Danube and the Rhine. From the fifth century BC these fierce tribes extended their control throughout Europe and even into Asia Minor. Invading, they moved fast, fighting from horse driven chariots, not staying in any one place for long. Where they settled, they established themselves as the ruling class. As well as the British Isles, they occupied Spain, France, Northern Italy, Austria, Hungary and the Balkans.

One tribe even sacked Rome in 385 BC. The Romans slowly recovered and, in time, took control of all the lands which the Celts had populated. The Celts remained independent only in outlying parts of the British Isles.

The Celts had a social structure based on the family. Several families made a sept, several septs, a clan, several clans a tribe. All members of the tribe claimed to be descended from one common ancestor. Before the Romans invaded the British Isles, and for some centuries

afterwards, the Celtic people followed the Druid religion. When the Romans came their soldiers, at least nominally, followed the religion of Mithras. The Romans did not impose their religion. They allowed the people to follow their old ways, in fact absorbed many of those religious practices for their own. This was particularly true of the Greek religion, but also applied to others. Despite this, the Celtic religion tended to decline in Roman occupied territory.

Not a great deal is accurately known about the Druid religion. The many standing stones and stone circles, which occur all over Scotland, Ireland and England actually predate the Druids. A brilliant society existed with knowledge of the movements of the stars and planets and capable of moving and raising huge boulders weighing as much as a hundred tons. No one knows much about this early society or how they performed their feats of engineering.

Evidence shows that the Druids were well aware of the use of standing stones as a calendar and able to predict the equinox and eclipses. Also left from the earlier period were a number of cup and ring stones (exposed areas of bedrock about sixty feet in diameter, carved with hieroglyphics and cup and circle shapes). Some prime examples of cup and ring stones exist within two miles of my home and just North of THE ROAD.

Early Christians were fairly tolerant and incorporated some Druid events and practices into their religion. December 25 is not likely the time when Jesus was born. The actual date of Jesus' birth was unknown and a pope in the fourth century chose December 25 to coincide with existing religious festivals (a date given to the celebration of the birth of Helios, the Sun God. It was also close to the Festival of Light and the shortest day of the year). The Island of Iona, before becoming the centre of Celtic Christianity, was known as the Island of the Druids. Some practices we still have from Druid times are knocking on wood (appealing to the spirits that live in the wood), throwing coins in a fountain or well (an offering to the water spirits), the use of mistletoe and holly as special at Christmas time.

Later Christians were not tolerant and many wonderful statues were destroyed around Rome at the hands of the Christians, not of the Vandals, Goths or Huns. Statues of Roman deities were not popular with the Christians who even fought wars with each other over such issues as the dual nature of Christ and the trinity. When trying to retake Rome from the barbarians, they found that these magnificent works of art, when broken or melted down, made wonderful projectiles for their huge catapults or components for their siege engines. (Take that, you ignorant barbarians!)

THE ROMANS: FIRST CENTURY B.C. TO FIFTH CENTURY A.D.

When the Romans arrived in the British Isles, they built two defensive walls across the whole country, Hadrian's Wall, made of stone blocks, across the North of what is now England and later Antonine's Wall across the narrow midlands of Scotland to protect them from the wild raiding Picts who came screaming in at them when they least expected it.

Antonine's Wall was built in the year 142 AD under a directive from Caesar Antoninus Pius. Hadrian's Wall had been under attack so many times that they thought a solution was to build another wall further North. The new wall was built by the three Legions who were garrisoned in the British Isles at this time, the Second Augusta, the Sixth Victrix, and the Twentieth Valeria Victrix. It was constructed of blocks of turf, laid on a stone foundation. It was 4.2 meters (14 feet) wide, 3.5 meters (12 feet) high and likely topped by a palisade. At the foot of the Wall was a defensive ditch, 12.5 meters (41 feet) wide. The wall ran from the town of Old Kilpatrick on the River Clyde in the West of Scotland, to Bo'ness (originally "Boroughness") on the River Forth, in the East, a distance of 60 Kilometers (40 miles). This wall, with all its forts was built in a period of between six months and two years. Antonine's Wall and the Road and constituted the Northern boundary of the Roman Empire. The very edge of civilization.

Any tribesman who ventured South, coming in sight of the wall would see this huge barrier, sixteen feet high, stretching farther than his eye could see, right across the country,

protected by a mound
and a huge ditch for its entire length. It would be an enormous psychological,
as well as a physical
barrier, leaving him with a sense of the futility of trying to fight against
Rome. That was the main
purpose of the Wall.

The Romans built a fort and communications centre on the high ground known as
The Roonie, near
where my home stood, signalling with the use of fire, smoke and light to other
high points along the
length of the wall. Another communications site, Golden Hill was situated two
miles to the East and
it too had a small fort. In fact every two miles along the Wall there was a
fort or fortlet. THE ROAD
was in fact a service road for Antonine's Wall. The road varied in width from
4.5 meters (18 feet) to
7.3 meters (24 feet) and ran parallel to the Wall for its entire length. It
allowed the Romans to
transport food and military supplies to their forts, move soldiers and work
crews to desired locations
and to respond quickly to raids and attacks.

The Roman soldiers who manned these forts at this time were not from Rome, had
never been
to Rome and most probably never would see the State that they were sworn to
defend with
their lives. The Legionaries were recruited from among the more civilized
people throughout the
Roman Empire. The Auxiliaries who manned the forts associated with Antonine's
Wall were recruited
from among the less civilized peoples within the Roman Empire. Each fort had
several hundred
Auxiliary soldiers. The soldiers drilled continually and were well equipped and
highly disciplined. All
were professionals, enlisted for a twenty five year period. Josephus is quoted
as saying "Their
manoeuvres are like bloodless battles: their battles like bloody manoeuvres."

With its full quota of soldiers, Antonine's wall would have a complement of
about 20,000 men
including footsoldiers and cavalry. These men were mostly raised from the
forces manning Hadrian's
Wall and other fortified positions throughout Britain.

Despite the training, equipment, and competence of the Roman Legions, and their
huge wall and
forts, they were unable to control the Picts, who usually avoided the pitched
battles at which the

Romans excelled. The Picts preferred to raid suddenly and unexpectedly, and then disappear into the mountains, marshes or woods, leaving a frustrated Roman army looking for them, not knowing where or when they would strike again.

Julius Caesar, looking across the English Channel from Gaul, is supposed to have said "Veni, Vidi, Vici" ("I came, I saw, I conquered"). The Romans arrived in the British Isles in 55 BC and moved into Scotland in 82 AD. After a number of difficult battles succeeded in occupying most of the main island by virtue of their superior technology and organizing skills. The Celtic people were used to fighting in clans or tribes and were often at war with each other. They had never succeeded in uniting large parts of their population in common cause.

RACISM AND SLAVERY

The Romans were to expend a lot of energy and manpower to maintain an army in Great Britain and Gaul for a long period, even through times when they needed the army quite badly in other places.

A likely reason for this is that they did it to feed Rome's voracious appetite for slaves. Slaves were used as a cheap source of labour and a highly expendable form of entertainment in the arenas. Just as happened in the 1700's in the Southern States of the USA, this demand led to people being viewed as a cash crop and they were captured into slavery or bred in stud farms. Slavery had always existed, but it was taken to new heights or depths. Around the Roman Empire tribes were stirred up and old animosities aroused that were driven by this market for people, where they could be traded for luxury goods. A citizen of Rome or of the Roman Empire could experience a fairly civilized life. A slave was viewed as sub human and often treated with great cruelty. If a surplus of babies was experienced at a stud farm, the unwanted babies were sometimes left in a large jar to starve to death. Life was cheap for slaves.

A common means of rationalizing slavery is to say "they are not people like us, they do not see things the way we do, they do not feel pain as we do. They like it this way." Author Nat Rutstein said that racism was institutionalized for two reasons and two reasons only:

1) To provide a cheap source of labour (slavery)

2) To grab land (as with the North American Indian. In fact, any aboriginal)

As slavery was abolished, its proponents, who usually viewed themselves as very civilized and

cultured, cried that it was a great step backwards. It has proved a giant step forward for mankind.

The longing for freedom has been irresistible force on the planet.

THE EFFECTS OF ROMAN OCCUPATION

The Roman historian Tacitus referred to the original peoples in the Northern part of the main Island

as Picti because they went into battle naked, with pictures painted on their bodies. The name stuck.

It was not their own name for themselves but the dominant society had writing skills and they wrote

the history books of the period. When the Romans arrived there were three kingdoms in Scotland.

They were referred to as the Kingdoms of the Picts, the Scots, and Strathclyde.

The Romans referred to people living within Roman occupied territory as Britons. These were

usually the same Celtic people, the only difference being whether they lived within or outside

of Roman occupied territory. The name given by the Romans to this, their Northernmost

province, was Britannia.

It seems that the Romans thought that the Picts in Scotland were conquered or at least well under

control, for with the building of Antonine's Wall they made many access road openings through

Hadrian's Wall to the South. In the end Antonine's Wall had little effect in diminishing the number of

attacks and when Antoninus died in 161 AD, after just nineteen years of manning the new wall, the

Romans abandoned it. They destroyed their forts and retreated again behind Hadrian's Wall.

The Romans occupied large parts of the British Isles from 55 B.C. until over four centuries later.

Under Roman rule every class flourished except for peasant farmers. Large estates expanded at the

expense of small farms; the peasant was often bought out and became a tenant farmer or a labourer

in the cities. There were times when many peasants supported the Anglo-Saxon invaders against the

landed aristocracy. However, Roman Britain prospered, cities multiplied and

expanded, wealth accumulated. Many homes had central heating and glass windows, many wealthy people had luxurious villas. British weavers exported high quality woollen goods as they do to this day. By the third century, a few Roman legions were sufficient to maintain internal security and external peace.

In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Britain was threatened on every side. (My Grandson Joshua, aged nine, insists that A.D. means After Dinosaurs) On the North by the Picts, on the South and East by the Norse and Saxons, on the West by the unsubdued Celts of Wales and the Gaels and "Scots" of Ireland (the word Scot originally meant a wanderer). In 364-7 AD coastal raids increased and British and Gallic soldiers repelled them. They still came back, ever pressing. In 381 AD, Maximus withdrew legions from Britain for personal reasons and for defense of Rome.

When the Romans pulled out, what had been Roman occupied Britain was threatened by invasion on all fronts. About the year 400 AD there was a desperate appeal from Britain to the Roman General Stilicho for help, but he was fully occupied in driving Huns and Goths from Italy and Gaul. When a further appeal was made, Emperor Honorius answered that the British must help themselves as best they could. Rome had ceased to rule Britain. Britain would not see such prosperity again, until after the Industrial Revolution.

Where they lived, they left a lasting legacy of engineering feats as well as systems of government and education. The Highlands were virtually untouched by such things. All during this period the Picts were to continue a guerrilla war. The Celts were often beaten in battle. Julius Caesar was to take one million of them into slavery over the period of his battles in Gaul alone, and an unknown but vast number from Great Britain. In the Highlands of Scotland the Picts never surrendered. They also had their successes. At one time the entire Ninth Roman Legion of five thousand men disappeared and history still does not know what happened to them.

"All roads lead to Rome" was a truism in the Ancient world. Their genius enabled them to build roads that carried them to all corners of the known world in conquest. The very same

roads were to become the avenues by which their enemies came pouring in to attack and eventually defeat them.

Stories of Saint Patrick

A Heroic Saint and the Early Christian Church in Ireland and Britain

SAINT PATRICK: FIFTH CENTURY

After Roman times there was little recorded until a later period when Christian monks started to keep records and write history. A great deal of what they wrote was destroyed in Viking raids and various other raids, wars, and looting that took place over the years. When Constantine, the Emperor of Rome became a Christian and made Christianity the State Religion of Rome, only twenty percent of the population was Christian, but the Christian Church assumed a great deal of influence. The Roman legions were no longer occupying Britain, but all citizens of the Empire was affected by this major event. The Christian religion was growing and many heroes, saints, and martyrs were engaged in teaching it throughout the known world.

Two miles West of the village of Duntocher, the Road runs through the ancient village of Old Kilpatrick, located on the North bank of the River Clyde, below the Old Kilpatrick Hills. Local tradition insists that Saint Patrick, one of the most loved Saints in the early Christian tradition (along with Saint Nicholas), was probably born here about 389 A.D. The old music hall song states that "Saint Patrick was a gentleman, and came from decent people" This is true. He was the son of a middle class British-Roman citizen and he was given a Roman name just like his father and grandfather before him. He was called Patricius. Saint Patrick lived so long ago that not much of his life story can be stated with confidence. Where he was born and where he died are two facts that are often in dispute. He was so popular that the Irish, Welsh, Scottish and even the French lay claim to his birthplace and last resting place. One self professed expert confidently informed me that this confusion was because there were actually three Saint Patricks! Anyway this is one version of his life.

I went to the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, Scotland seeking for anything in writing to confirm the Scottish tradition. At first I wondered if everyone spoke with a lisp in those days, but it was just that modern spelling has changed from that of the 1700's when the letters "s" and "f" were interchangeable. I was thrilled to find a copy of an ancient book containing the following:

OLD KILPATRICK
(COUNTY OF DUMBARTONSHIRE)

By the reverend Mr John Davidson

Minifter of the Parifh

Origin of the name:

Kirk or Kil-patrick takes its name from St Patrick, the tutelar faint of Ireland, who, tradition fays, was a native of the parifh. There are many circuftances favouring this tradition; though Mr O'Halloran, an Irifh writer, fupposes that he was rather a native of Wales. In the burying place in the churchyard, there is a ftone of gtreant antiquity, with a figure faid to be that of St Patrick upon it; and fome go fo far af to affert, that he was buried under it. In the River Clyde, oppofite to the church, there is a large ftone or rock, vifible at low water, called Ft Patrick's Ftone; and Pennant(1) fays, "Ireland will fcarce forgive me if I am filent about the birth-place of its tutelar faint. He firft drew breath at Kirkpatrick, and derived his name from his father, a noble Roman, (a Patrician), who fled hither in the time of perfecution."(2)

In a later chapter in the same book I found some comment on the legendary King Arthur. When the Romans marched in to the area of the River Clyde they found it populated by the Damnii or Damnonii, a Cymric branch of the Celtic race. This district, afterwards called Strathclyde, had as its capital Acuith or Dumbarton. Under Roman influence these people became in manners and customs, more advanced than their wild Pict neighbours. That they were at least nominally Christians we learn from St Patrick's Confession. On the Roman withdrawal from Britain, Strathclyde became a battleground as Picts, Scots, Angles, Jutes and Saxons harried the Britons whose home it was. This is what this book had to say about Arthur.

It was during these struggles that the great Cymric hero, Arthur the Faultless, King of Poets, first saw light. Guildas in the 6th century and Nennius in the 7th relate Arthur's real history; while Merlin, the poet of Tweedsdale, and Llywarch Hen and Taliesin, both poets of the Lennox, sing his praises. It has been thought that one of the battles of Arthur was fought in the neighborhood of Duntocher, certainly in the neighbouring parish of Strathblane, where "Arthur's Stone" bears witness to one of his victories.(3)

After Constantine made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire, citizens of the Empire could see the writing on the wall. If you wanted to get ahead in life, if you wanted to have a career in government employment, being Christian would be an asset. It was rather like being an Episcopalian in the USA. Many Christians were sincere but it was not viewed primarily as something which should change your behaviour or your lifestyle.

For example, when the Christian city of Corinth, Greece fell to the army of Attila the Hun, he was shocked to find that every street corner had a brothel. Attila, in his own way, believed in family

values. He gave the prostitutes two choices; either marry one of his men, or leave Carthage.

In his Confession St Patrick says "I had for father, Deakon Calpurnius, son of the late Potitus, a priest of the settlement Bannavern Taburniae. He had a nearby small villa where I was taken captive".

Patrick showed no interest in the religion of his Father and Grandfather but at the age of 16, in that same turbulent period, just after Roman withdrawal and when Arthur emerged as a leader, that Patrick was taken into captivity in Ireland "with thousands of others" as a result of a raid. The Irish had become skilled pirates and as the power of the Roman army receded and finally vanished as a deterrent force, Irish raiders terrorized the coast of Britain, coming in fleets of coracles, little round hide boats, and making off with loot and many slaves.

Life was cheap in Ireland and none so cheap as the life of a slave boy. Falling from the status of a much loved son in a middle class family in a very civilized land, Patrick was to endure extreme privation, with cold and rain, half naked and near starvation in the windswept hills of Antrim in Ireland. He spent months at a time in solitude and, not speaking the language, probably feared any stranger that came in view. After about six years herding pigs and sheep, he escaped by ship, probably into northern France, eventually returning home. In his own words "And again, after a few years, I was in the Britains with my parents, who received me as a son and earnestly besought me that now at least, after the many hardships I had endured, I would never leave them again".(4)

The character of most great people is forged on the anvil of extreme hardship and duress. This was true of Patrick. During his captivity he prayed and fasted extensively and became a devout Christian, crediting God for his release, which seems to have been under rather mystical circumstances. In later years, although of limited education, he studied the Bible so intently that he could quote it from memory as required. He felt a calling (in fact heard voices) and longed to return to Ireland.

In preparation for going to Ireland, he studied for the priesthood in France where he must have had great difficulty because again the language was different and his Latin was shaky, but finally he was ordained. When he arrived in Ireland, Palladius, the newly appointed first bishop for Ireland died, and Pope Celestine appointed Patrick in his place. Patrick failed to convert the enlightened pagan King Laeghaire, but won support for his mission.

The Irish were certainly wild. Every society has its collectors. There were no postage stamps in those days, so the Irish collected

the heads of their enemies. These were hung on chariots, on horses, placed in special little nooks built at the entrance to their houses, and the fresh ones were either carried in the hands for waving about or hung from the belt at their waist to free up the hands for fighting. In victory ceremonies a head would be used as a football and skulls as drinking cups. It was amazing that Patrick managed to hang on to his head to complete his work.

Among their customs, the Celts practiced various forms of human sacrifice. If a community fell on hard times with crops or hunting failing, it was assumed that the gods were angry with the people and had to be appeased, so someone would have to be sacrificed. If it was a minor crisis then a slave would do. If a major crisis occurred, someone highborn, perhaps a son of the King or chief, would volunteer to be sacrificed for the good of the community. The various bodies found preserved in peat bogs proved that this happened. When Patrick taught about a God of love, and the story of Abraham, being spared by God from having to sacrifice his son, they were interested. When he taught them that Jesus had died for the sins of us all, and that making human sacrifices would make the God of the universe angry, many were relieved and open to consider the rest of the Christian teachings.

The Celts at this time recognized a pantheon of over four hundred gods, sixty-nine of whom were related to war. The Druids saw in Patrick a threat to their power. They opposed him, and at Tara, they "showed the people their magic". Patrick's response was to demonstrate the use of exorcism to cast out demons and eventually he won the day. There are many stories of the miracles he performed (cast out devils, gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, raised nine persons from the dead, and wrote 365 books) but it was probably his confident belief and passionate love of the people that converted the Irish. He was not a patient man and could "dispense maledictions and benedictions with equal readiness".(5)

When Pope Gregory the Great in Rome saw two Britons, a man and a woman, being sold in a slave auction, he was greatly taken by their blonde beauty. On being told that they were Angles he made three little puns about "Angles" and "Angels" and he resolved to try to evangelize the English. However he made no attempt to have these slaves freed. Patrick fought for the emancipation of slaves centuries before the rest of the civilized world thought about it.

Behind every myth there is a reality. Patrick may not have performed the above miracles, but what he accomplished was more miraculous. Because of his personal experience as a slave, he hated slavery with a passion. His extreme maledictions were against those who took the newly converted Christians, especially the young women, into slavery. He loved them dearly and knew only too well what their life in

slavery would be like.

There are no swear words in the Gaelic language. Our four letter words come from the Saxon language. "Daughter of the Devil" or "Son of the Devil" was fighting talk. "Bad cess to him" my Irish Grandmother used to say, usually in reference to Adolf Hitler. I never found out what "cess" was but it was convincing when said with feeling. Patrick derides the slave raiders, King Coroticus and his men as "dogs and sorcerers and murderers and liars and false swearers....who distribute baptized girls for a price, and that for the sake of a miserable temporal kingdom which truly passes away in a moment like a cloud of smoke that is scattered by the wind."

Such was his courage, determination and persistence, his love of God and his love of the Irish people that over a thirty year period he converted thousands to Christianity and was able to persuade the Irish to stop slave raids. They would still keep slaves and some would buy slaves from Britain but the massive raids from Ireland ceased. Ireland was no longer a slave trading country. From the time of Jesus, in Rome, the eternal city, lived the greatest assembly of brilliant philosophers, orators, historians, scholars and poets. They were acutely aware of the disintegration of Roman life and gave their best efforts to improving it. The only passing mentions they made of Christianity was to scoff at it. They never conceived that it held any answer to their problem. By the time of Patrick's mission, Rome, whose might had guaranteed prosperity and security to its citizens for seven hundred years, was tumbling from order to anarchy; Ireland was moving under the influence of Patrick from anarchy to order. The life giving teachings of Jesus were empowering this strange people enabling them to not only resolve their own problems but to make a great gift to the world.

In Roman Britain at this time, when foreign or homegrown pirates raided, the more powerful people had fortified homes and small militia forces that could provide security. They offered shelter to neighbouring small farmers, but when the raids had passed the refugees would often find that the price for accepting asylum was that they and their families were now slaves of the wealthy household. The Britons who had been taken into slavery were often purchased back by wealthy Christian neighbours, not as ransom for their freedom but to be kept as slaves by these same neighbours.

In his Confession Patrick emphasizes that he never accepted any material gain for his services "not even the price of a shoe. If anyone believes that I have, let him say so to my face and I shall return it to him." He had baptized "so many thousand peoples and did not hope for even half a jot from them" He went on to say that he had even offended some who had placed gifts for him at the altar, by returning the gifts.

You may wonder why Patrick had to make such stout denials of personal gain. It may arouse your suspicions. He had good reasons. The people of Roman Britain were more prosperous and civilized than their neighbouring Celts and many became proud and arrogant. They viewed the Irish as sub-human and fumed that the legions could no longer protect them from raids. Roman British Christians would not consider trying to teach their religion to the Irish. Patrick wishing to leave the civilized world to live among the Irish was incomprehensible. It was viewed very cynically and many in the Church were sure that he had ulterior motives for personal gain.

In the four hundred years since Christianity started, the religion had grown within the boundaries of the Greek and Roman Empires. No-one had ventured into really uncivilized territory. Even Saint Augustine never tried it. One time he went outside of the city of Hippo where he was Bishop and was pursued by a mob of Donatists, who were Christians with a different viewpoint from the Roman Church. He never ventured forth again. So, strange as it may seem, Patrick was the first missionary.

The early Church in Britain produced its share of saints and scholars. It also produced its share of bigots and narrow minded Christians. Patrick, perhaps due to his earlier adventures in life, was unsophisticated. His fellow British ecclesiastics saw him as crude, rough and uneducated. His manners were not polished and his grasp of the Latin language was the source of much amusement. Patrick stories circulated freely. "Have you heard the latest..." They were positive that the only reason he had gone to live there was to trick the guileless savages out of their treasures.

Patrick was to write many letters to church officials in Britain pleading for assistance in freeing Irish Christians who had been taken into slavery in Britain. All to no avail. British Christians did not view Irish Christians as full fledged Christians, or as human beings either, because they were not Roman.

According to local tradition in Scotland, Patrick left Ireland and spent his last years working out of the village of Old Kilpatrick in Scotland. An old weather-beaten signpost from modern times indicates where St Patrick's or The Trees Well was located. For centuries pilgrims travelled to visit the well site and to partake of its healing waters. For many years it was the obligation of the lord on whose land it stood to provide for these pilgrims. This continued until the well was found to be unfit for use in the 1800's and sealed off. What is said to be Patrick's gravestone is the oldest visible in the ancient graveyard. It is propped against the church wall where it is offered some protection from the elements, but it has not been preserved as such a historic stone deserves to be. St Patrick's Rock in the River Clyde, near the new Erskine Bridge is said to be where

he was fishing when he was carried off Ireland by the pirates.

When his ship arrived in Scotland from Ireland, he must have shouldered his belongings and walked home the seven dangerous miles from Dumbarton along this very same road. Thereafter he often would use THE ROAD in his travels, attempting to Christianize and baptize, bestowing blessings and curses as he went, on the free spirits whose salvation he viewed as his mission in life.

By the time of Patrick's death, about 465 AD, Christianity was well established in Ireland. Bishops had been appointed, and little groups of monks were in their cells pursuing knowledge and copying and translating not only the Bible but many works from Latin and Greek. When Viking ships were devastating the coast of Europe and Britain, burning and pillaging, Ireland was sheltered from these raids for over a hundred years as it was more out of the way and less prosperous. During all this time, scholarship flourished as did music and literacy. Europe, North America and Australia pride themselves on being built and modelled on Roman and Greek culture: the home of democracy itself.

Such were the depredations of the Barbarians and the Vikings that all of the libraries in Europe were burned, literacy and scholarship and music died. Can you imagine the effort and skill it took to copy by hand and illustrate an entire Bible? The most artistic of these would be bound in covers which would be decorated with semi precious stones. During a Viking raid the calligrapher slaughtered, the book seeming worthless, would be burned, the cover ripped off to be taken home as trinkets for the family.

We know of many classics which were lost forever. During this period there was only one place in all of Europe where the flame of civilization was nurtured - Ireland. There is not one classic book presently available from ancient Greece or Rome that was not carefully, lovingly, translated and preserved for the world, by these same Irish monks. Yet Greek and Roman classics were a bonus; they did not save Greece or Rome. The real gift of Ireland was the life giving teachings of Jesus which alone had the power to change the hearts of men, and transform their behaviour.

How did the Irish make the transition from a society of headhunters to saints and scholars? It happened in a relatively short span of time. It must also be acknowledged that the earliest Irish monks were very adept at the use of the sword when necessary to protect their flock and churches. In these turbulent times this proved a vital asset. Many anchorites and monks fled to Ireland seeking sanctuary from the barbarian hordes that overran the Empire, bringing with them various versions of Christianity as well as books and knowledge and learning. The brightest and most dedicated of the newly converted

Irish Christians learned Latin to read the Bible and Greek to know more about the New Testament. The famous Book of Kells, a translation of the Gospels, has been described as "the work of Angels" by enemies of the Church. Having mastered Latin and Greek they copied the Bible to make it more widely available. This linguistic skill enabled them to translate the preserved wisdom of the ages from those languages. The Irish Church of this time was very broad minded and did not feel threatened in translating works with stories about Roman and Greek deities.

Saint Patrick it was who laid the foundation. Following his success and example in bringing Christianity to this country scholars, missionaries and saints surged forth, enabling society "to carry forward an ever advancing civilization." After the Roman Legions left Britain, Roman Britons had fought with invading Angles and Saxons for a hundred years. They had been pushed back north of Hadrian's Wall. The invaders had established themselves and settled all over England (Angleland) and imposed their language (English). Such was the animosity of British Christians towards these invaders that they would not dream of trying to teach the Christian Faith to them.

The Irish had not suffered at the hands of Angles and Saxons and had no hesitation in offering Christianity to them. Irish missionaries poured forth, establishing monasteries in Iona and Lindisfarne. From these bases, men and women went forth with their hand copied bibles. They successfully preached Christianity to Angles, Saxons, Britons, Picts, French and anyone else who would listen. They founded monasteries all over Europe. As Europe became more stable, Irish scholars with their love of learning became tutors to the children of influential families all over the continent. Ireland became the publishing house of Europe. Even as late as 870 AD Heiric of Auxerre was to say "Almost all of Ireland is migrating to our shores with a herd of philosophers" They arrived with books tied triumphantly to their waistbands, just as their ancestors had carried the heads of their enemies. Here was a turning point of history; it was Ireland's gift to civilization; it was Patrick's gift to all of us.

My mother used to tell me "You would try the patience of a saint". I suppose your mother told you the same thing. Patrick had little patience but his hot temper was used mostly to good purpose. Who would have dreamed that these wild Irish people could have become scholars and spiritual giants and carry the torch of civilization through its most endangered period in history. Patrick loved the Irish and believed in them. They became "his" people and he became one of them. He honoured them and they in turn honoured him.

What were Patrick's real achievements?

- He was the first Christian Missionary to live beyond the

boundaries of civilization.

- He put an end to the misery of slave trading.

- He ended the Irish practice of human sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary.

- He laid the foundation for the Irish to become a "nation of scholars and saints". This semi-literate simple man, on fire with the teachings of Jesus, enabled his Irish followers and successors to preserve civilization and give it as a gift to a world which had lost it.

These achievements are surely greater and much more useful than the more spectacular ones usually attributed to him. Patrick is owed recognition and gratitude that is fifteen hundred years overdue. The next Saint Patrick's Day, when you are drinking green beer at your favourite pub, or having a tasty green milk shake at McDonalds Restaurant, hearing songs and jokes about the Irish, in the midst of the fun, give a thought to this heroic and saintly man. We owe him a lot. All of us.

THE CELTIC CHURCH AND THE ROMAN CHURCH

From the first century on, just as Jesus foretold, false prophets were at work, changing His teachings so that they became more acceptable but quite distorted. These enemies were within the Christian movement itself. Jesus told a parable of a man who sowed his fields with good quality wheat seeds. While he slept an enemy came by and sowed these fields with tare seeds. The two grew alongside each other, totally intermixed. A servant asked his master whether he should try to weed out the tares, his master said to leave them and not disturb the wheat. When the harvest time comes they would be separated, the tares tied in bundles and burned.

In 1839 Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote "People imagine that the place the Bible holds in the world, it owes to miracles. It owes it simply to the fact that it came out of a profounder depth of thought than any other book." People have always loved miracles. From very early times, growing right alongside His beautiful life giving teachings, were numerous man made distortions, the tares. The earliest Jesus People had no knowledge of a Virgin birth. The same word was used for virgin and for young woman. They said nothing about a physical resurrection. They did not think that Jesus was God, or a Lord, they had no idea of Holy Communion, with a wafer and wine turning into the body and blood of Christ, or of a priest transforming into Christ in the process. Most of these miraculous teachings existed already in Greek, Roman and other Mediterranean religions. Introducing them to Christianity would make it easier to win converts.

When the four narrative Gospels first appeared, one by one, between

the year 80 to year 120, they were so much more interesting and readable than the earliest Gospels, which would be more accurate, that everyone adopted them and the earlier versions were first neglected, then lost. They were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, who in all likelihood would be dead by then. In earliest times Bishops were just leaders, elected by their community. The Trinity was unheard of. That Jesus died for your sins was a concept introduced by Paul. A righteous man was one who lived in harmony with Jewish laws, a sinner one who did not. Paul was trying to wean Christians away from their idea that to become a Christian one had first to become a Jew, a concept being taught by Peter and James. Since this included that men had to get circumcised it was a real barrier to winning new members!

Christians have long believed that Jesus was a unique incarnation of God that has never before appeared in history and will never again appear. There is nothing in all of Jesus' recorded teachings to support this belief. This tenet has prevented Christians from accepting or even considering any Prophet that God has sent or will ever send. Yet God promises in His Covenant with man, never to leave him alone. The belief has also separated Christianity from all of the other major World Religions. But then, they also have long since fabricated similar beliefs for themselves. This may be why all of God's Prophets have suffered.

No one in the Western world can now hope to read the Bible without having been preconditioned by it, and by the various misunderstandings and misinterpretations it has experienced. The wheat and the tares; in time these man made stories become traditions and loved by all. There have been many times in history that to question them would mean exclusion from the community, or even torture or death. Yet these were the Christian teachings that Patrick knew and loved. They still contained the beautiful teachings of Jesus. The wheat.

Now, the Irish had no intention of deviating from the Roman Church's tenets, it just happened and was quite understandable. Numerous Christian anchorites and monks arrived in Ireland from all parts of the Roman Empire, fleeing from the Barbarians. They brought many books with them and a strange mixture of eclectic beliefs. The Irish viewed the Pope in Rome rather like a High King. They recognized him, but he was far away and had little to do with everyday life. They saw him as one of the family, who now and then needed to be straightened out. Women assumed an important role in Ireland. They performed the duties of priests and abbots. Brigid was even appointed Bishop (some said later, by mistake). Confession was something you did with a soul-friend, someone you really trusted. The Druids had performed this service in earlier times. Sex was a natural part of life and the

Irish focussed on eliminating fighting, head collecting and human sacrifice, not on sexual mores.

It was inevitable that the Roman and Celtic Churches would collide. The Celts coming from the North and West in England met the Romans coming from the South. Both groups met in 664 AD at a synod before a king near Whitby, England, to argue the merits of their versions of Christianity. The Roman group did not present great philosophical arguments, but insisted that their version of Christianity was the right one. Their most conclusive argument was that the Roman Church claimed to have the bones of Saint Peter while the Celtic Church could only claim the bones of the missionary Saint Columba (sixth century). Another item under discussion was tonsure. The Romans shaved a small circlet at the crown of their heads. The Irish shaved the front half of the head, from ear to ear and forward, letting the back half grow long. The Romans thought this was a sure sign of their barbaric roots. As one of the Celtic abbots said "What more perverse thing can be felt of our church than if we say 'Rome is wrong. Jerusalem is wrong. Antioch is wrong, the whole world is wrong: only the Irish and the Britons know what is right, these peoples who are almost at the ends of the earth, and you might say a pimple on the chin of the world'". The King remembering that "The keys of the Kingdom" had been given to Peter was afraid that Peter if displeased, might use them to lock him out, ruled in favour of the Romans. The Celtic Church yielded.

The only aspect of the Celtic Church that was incorporated in the practices of the Roman Church was the privacy of Confession. The Roman version at this time was that confession was a public affair and the penitent had to stand outside the church door in sackcloth and ashes for days, exposed to public censure. Sin was a crime against the church. Some sins were thought to be unforgivable and at best, forgiveness could only be given once. A second theft or adultery could cause the individual to be cast outside of the body of the church. The Irish on the other hand, were very tolerant and thought that sinning was part of the human condition, no great thing. All of us sin, all of the time. The feelings of the sinner must be spared and any embarrassment avoided. It was the Christian thing to do. Sinning was something between the penitent and God. The Roman Church could have benefited from adopting more of the tolerant Irish ideas.

Down through the ages the Christian Church has been more concerned about rites and doctrines rather than moral conduct. The Church has conducted persecution, burning at the stake, extermination of heretics, and suppression of truth by force. Jesus said "By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another." One wonders how different the history of Europe might have

been if the Church had rather focussed its considerable powers on this wonderful civilizing principle.

A PERSONAL CONNECTION

Along THE ROAD itself I enjoyed many childhood adventures, building hideouts in the blackthorn hedgerows, sailing make believe boats in the "wee burns" (streams), populating water filled bomb craters with minnows, climbing ancient trees and, in season, lying among the fragrant bluebells gazing at the passing clouds.

Near the village of Old Kilpatrick, there is another graveyard called Dalnotter. Most of my family are buried here, so you could say that I have deep roots in the area. My Father, Grandmother, Grandfather, and various Uncles and Aunts, all found their last resting place there, looking out over the wild Old Kilpatrick Hills. My Uncle Jack, whom I was named after, is a close neighbour of the Saint himself, being buried in the same ancient graveyard.

Perhaps this uncle, somewhat of a bard, has been introducing Patrick to the poems and songs of another famous son of Scotland, Robert Burns. A verse I think he would appreciate:

Its coming yet, as come it may,

And come it will for all that,

That man to man the World o'er,

Will brothers be for all that.

HOW ENGLAND WAS CREATED

Meanwhile, the area now known as England was faced with a large scale invasion of Picts. The British

leader Vortigern invited some North German Tribes to come to his aid. Saxons from the Elbe, Angles

from Schleswig, and Jutes from Jutland, all came in 449 AD and vigorously repelled the Picts and Scots.

They were given tracts of land as their reward. However they saw how weak the British were militarily and sent word to their fellow tribesmen at home.

Uninvited, hordes of these tribesmen landed in Britain and after a century of warring, defeated the

British at Deorham (577 AD) and became masters of what became Angle-land (England). Some Britons

retreated to the mountains of Wales and fought on, some crossed the channel and gave their name to

Brittany, but most accepted the conquest and their blood was mixed with that of their conquerors. From

this time forward the people and culture of England were different from those

of Scotland, Wales, and
Ireland.

Over a hundred years of warfare had a disastrous effect on society. Cities were ruined, art became dormant, law and order vanished, and the infant Christianity was overpowered by the gods and customs of Germany. Britain and its language became Teutonic; Roman law and institutions disappeared, and Roman municipal organization was replaced by village communities. A Celtic element remained in English physical appearance, character, literature, and art, but very little in the English language which is now a cross between German and French.

It was in those black days that the legend of King Arthur emerged, to be further embellished in later centuries. It is rather like the creation of Superman in later times to right the wrongs and bind the wounds of a decadent and helpless society. It is not known for sure what basis in fact the legend had but it, like Superman, provided hope and entertainment for generations. King Arthur was called "the Once and Future King". (We shall have something to say about the real Arthur a little further on.)

THE NORMANS: ELEVENTH CENTURY

England was a fertile land and seen as a great prize by many seeking a better life. It was now made up of Celts, Britons, Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Norse. King Harold was the newly crowned King of England and already doing a fair job defending it. He had just succeeded in defeating a large force of Vikings in the North of England in the year 1066. Then there was a major invasion of Normans from Normandy, across the channel, under their leader the Duke of Normandy, later to be known as King William the Conqueror. After a battle lasting nine hours, King Harold was killed in the Battle of Hastings. He was struck in the eye by a Norman arrow. He fell, blinded with blood and the Norman knights cut his body to pieces as he lay on the battlefield. At the sight of their leader going down, the British side faltered, the Normans surged to victory. This outcome of the Battle of Hastings was to change the way of life for the nation in a major way, and for a long time.

The Norman Lords divided up the country between them, suppressed any opposition, and set themselves up as supreme rulers. The Britons were reduced to the role of servants and to this day the words pig, sheep, cow, are Saxon words, whereas pork, mutton, and beef, are Norman words. The Britons had the job of raising the animals for the Normans to eat. Another carry over in our language from this time is shown in the doublespeak used in legal agreements, where two words are used instead of one. It was agreed at the time that because a legal document was important it should be expressed in both languages (i.e Will and Testament, Devise and Bequeath, etc.). The Normans established in Britain, the Feudal System which was in effect in much of Europe at the time. The Feudal System was to provide a stable system of organization but leave the curse of the class system which still plagues and hinders Britain to this day.

After the Norman Conquest a number of Normans moved into Scotland where they settled, building many massive castles of stone, which replaced earlier hill forts. One of these castles was built on a hill overlooking the meandering Forth River in Stirling, the ancient capitol of Scotland. It was to be the home of Kings and, overlooking the first crossing on the River Forth, dominated this gateway to the Highlands. Another was the powerful Dumbarton Castle, built on a huge rocky outcrop, looking out over the Clyde River and guarding the West from attack by land or sea. Both of these castles are still in existence, both have played a significant role in the history of Scotland, and both are linked by THE ROAD.

The Normans used THE ROAD for communications and moving military personnel and supplies between the two places. It was about the year 1066 the Boyd family moved to Scotland, the father, Robert de Boyd, and his two sons settling in Ayrshire. Worth mentioning is the fact that the Normans, before they settled in Normandy in the South of France were Norsemen. Norman Lords now owned land in France, England and Scotland. Astute Kings encouraged this system as it extended their control by having the allegiance of Lords in all these countries.

Stories of Sir William Wallace

Scotland's Greatest Hero

THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

This is from the story of an ancient road and events that happened on it. This chapter is about the Scottish Wars of Independence the giant hero William Wallace, Braveheart. My family name is Boyd and my ancestors were involved in these Wars.

Edward I of England was of the Plantagenet family and was sometimes known behind his back as Longshanks (he was around six feet six inches tall). He was a good husband, a good friend to many a great warrior and was acknowledged as the First Knight of Christendom. He was also consumed with a need to have his own way and merciless with any who prevented this. In later years he may have gone a little mad. He was capable of great cruelty and vindictiveness and called himself the Hammer of the Scots

King Edward was ambitious and wanted to rule England, Wales, Ireland, France and Scotland. In this Chapter he moves on Scotland.

Thirteenth Century: WILLIAM WALLACE (Braveheart)

Scots Wha Hae

Scots, wha hae wi Wallace bled,

Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,

Welcome to your gory bed,

Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;

See the front o' battle lour;

See approach proud Edward's power -

Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?

Wha can fill a coward's grave?

Wha sae base as be a slave?

Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law

Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa'
Let him follow me!
By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in ev'ry foe!
Liberty's in ev'ry blow! -
Let us do - or die!
-- Robert Burns

The life of William Wallace was portrayed in a recent motion picture called Braveheart, but Hollywood is more interested in profit than accuracy in making historical films. Wallace was the heroic defender of the liberty of Scotland from the usurper, King Edward I of England who liked to refer to himself as The Hammer of the Scots.

The real William Wallace was a giant of a man, said to be seven feet tall. Whether or not this is true is hard to say since the man was hanged, drawn and quartered, and no part of him remains intact. His head was dipped in pitch to preserve it and spiked on London Bridge, his right leg and foot went to Berwick, his right arm above the bridge in Newcastle, "over the common sewers", his left arm in Stirling. His left leg was sent to Aberdeen, where it is now buried in the wall of St. Machars Cathedral. All this in an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of the Scots and to subdue them once and for all. In the end it had the opposite effect.

WILLIAM WALLACE - THE EARLY DAYS

Wallace was born around the year 1276, the second son of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie. Since all of this happened so long ago it is impossible to tell his story with total accuracy. A poet by the name of Blind Harry is the main source of information, but he set down many of the traditions a hundred and fifty years after Wallace's death in 1305. Wallace was brought up by an uncle in Stirlingshire

and was instilled with the ideas of independence and patriotism. His Uncle told him "I tell you a truth, liberty is the best of all things, my son, never live under any slavish bond".

We can be sure that Wallace was very large and powerful as his sword, ("which none but he could wield") is still on display in the Wallace Monument in Stirling. It is a double handed weapon and has a blade 52 inches long and weighs twelve pounds. It was carried in a scabbard on his back and drawn over the shoulder.

When Wallace was about nineteen years old and a student, he and a few of his friends were furious at the outrages committed by the English soldiers of occupation who were left to garrison the various castles and towns. They vowed to oppose any acts of aggression and to defend themselves if necessary. Wallace was publicly insulted by a crowd headed by a youth named Selby, the son of the governor of Dundee, who demanded Wallace hand over his dagger. Wallace gave him the dagger right through the heart, killing him instantly. He was able to escape, killing two of the others who tried to stop him. Being easily recognized because of his size, he was proclaimed a traitor, outlawed and forced to hide in the woods. From this point on he had nothing to lose. His sweetheart was executed for helping him to escape, his Uncle was murdered. This all combined to make him a very dangerous and ruthless adversary.

His phenomenal strength, agility, courage, iron constitution, and enterprising spirit combined with his undying hatred of the English oppressors made him ideally suited to lead a band of patriots. Outlawed rebels just like himself were soon attracted to his side. They became a small movement for national independence, surviving chiefly by plunder, attacking the convoys of supplies sent by the English, taking to the woods when pursued. He often would visit the garrisoned towns in disguise to assess the strength of the enemy, frequently getting into scrapes with enemy soldiers, escaping difficult situations when heavily outnumbered. He was several times captured but managed to escape. On one occasion he was thrown in jail and left to starve to death. Then he was pronounced dead and his body thrown on a dung heap. His childhood nurse, now an old woman, asked the jailers if she could claim the body and she was given permission. While cleaning the body she thought she

noticed the barest signs of life. She quietly nursed him back to life and he was spirited away until he recovered his health.

The word of Wallace's "death" spread like wildfire and was even promoted by his friends, who enacted a wake and funeral. The common folk were distraught, for in him they saw a glimmer of hope in the dark days of English domination and oppression.

When True Thomas (sometimes known as Thomas the Rhymer) the legendary mystic poet of the time was informed that Wallace had died, he became alarmed and made inquiries. When told that he was really alive he predicted that Wallace would, before his death, slay thousands of the English oppressors and drive them from Scotland. This prophecy was to have great effect on the country. Word of it reached William and speeded his recovery. He believed that his escape from death was a sign from heaven that he was destined for great events.

When the people heard that Wallace had "returned from the dead" and were told of True Thomas's prophecy, the effect on the common folk was immense. They knew he was destined to lead the Nation. The English were alarmed. They now knew that they were not just dealing with an outlaw hiding in the hills.

His heroic exploits now became legendary and after the Scottish defeat at the Battle of Dunbar, he became the main focus of hope for the common people. As hope grew he attracted support from more powerful people including Sir Andrew Murray, Sir William Douglas, and closest of all, Sir John the Graham, and Sir Robert Boyd (an ancestor).

There is a tradition in our family of naming the first born son Robert, as with my son, my elder brother, my father, my Grandfather, and so on. The Wallaces were attached by ties of blood to the Boyds of Kilmarnock.

The Boyd seat was Dean Castle, which stands to this day. A witness to a charter in the year 1205 was one

Dominus Robertus Boyd, miles (Lord Robert Boyd, knight). The name Boyd may have come from a Gaelic

word buidhe meaning yellow haired, but it equally may have had a Norman origin.

The son of this knight,

another Sir Robert, played an outstanding role in the last great battle the

Scots had with the Vikings, the Battle

of Largs in 1263. Vikings had been terrorizing the Scottish coast since about the year 795 and had settled in

the Western Islands. The Battle of Largs finally ended Viking hopes of totally conquering Scotland. After Norse King Haakon's defeat, Sir Robert Boyd led his companions in routing a Norse army at a place called Goldberry Hill. The words Gold Berry were incorporated as the motto in the Boyd coat of arms. The son of this victor at Gold Berry was one of Wallace's main lieutenants from the earliest campaigns of the Wars of Independence and later gave stalwart support to Robert the Bruce.(6)

King Edward I of England had annexed Wales and now turned his attention to the Scots, whom he despised. He had deposed and imprisoned the Scottish King John Balliol and now occupied the ancient Kingdom of Scotland, with English garrisons in every castle. The Scots were a freedom loving people who had lived at peace for two hundred years. They were not experienced in warfare. Edwards vassals were ruthless and callous in governing Scotland and the Kings plan was to grind down and terrorize the population. In 1296 with a huge army he sacked the town of Berwick and massacred its population of around 60,000 men, women, children, and babies. The Scottish people hated the English but were leaderless and bowed down with cruelties and taxation. Then as John of Fordun stated in his Annals "In (the year) 1297, William Wallace raised up his head."

In that year, the leading Scots of Ayrshire were summoned in King Edward's name to a tall barracks building known as the Barns of Ayr. They were admitted one at a time and once inside the door were seized and hanged from the huge roof beam. In this way some 369 barons, knights, and gentlemen were killed without trial the leading Ayrshire nobility were eliminated in one day. Their bodies were stripped and thrown into the yard. Among the dead were a number of Wallace's family including his uncle, also a number of Boyds.

When Wallace returned to Ayr and heard of this event he rallied Robert Boyd, cousin Adam Wallace and others and a few days later returned with his followers to town. He asked a girl to mark with chalk all the houses where the English lived and had the doors barred. Boyd and fifty men kept watch on the castle of Ayr, Wallace led his men to the Barns where the English judge and a large company were sleeping off a late night of drinking, celebrating a job well done. Wallace had brushwood and kindling piled around the building then

set it ablaze. One hundred and forty English troops stationed at the Priory were killed by the monks. When the garrison at the castle saw the flames they sallied forth only to be attacked and cut down by Boyd and his men. The poet, Blind Harry estimated the English dead at 5,000 but this is probably an exaggeration.(7)

HIS INFLUENCE GROWS

As Wallace's forces grew stronger, they grew more ambitious, recaptured the city of Glasgow, expelling the cruel Bishop Bek. Wallace now quickly marched to the Ancient capitol, Scone in May 1297, surprising Ormsby, the English Judiciary, dispersing the English forces and capturing enemy treasury held there. Wallace now moved to the Western Highlands where he attracted support from various lords including Robert the Bruce who now embraced the cause of freedom and drew his sword with Wallace.

On hearing of Wallace's success, Edward was incensed and sent a force of 40,000 footsoldiers and 300 cavalry under Sir Henry Percy and Sir Robert Clifford, to resolve "the Scottish problem". Dissention started to break out in the Scottish camp when the two armies met near the town of Irvine. Wallace was immensely popular with the common folk, but failed to attract enough support from the leading lords of Scotland, partly because he was of Celtic origin, and they of Norman blood.

The Lords were also unhappy, being led by someone they felt was inferior to them in status, since Wallace was the very young second son of a minor landowner. They deserted to the enemy side, the exceptions being Moray, Graham and Boyd. The only avenue left to Wallace was to retreat to the North, avoiding a battle. Percy and Clifford thought that this had resolved the Scottish problem and returned South, only to be attacked and routed by Wallace. The English had now been forced South of THE ROAD, except for Dundee Castle. While laying siege to the castle, Wallace heard that a huge English army was advancing north under the Earl of Surrey. The siege was abandoned in order to face this army.

THE BATTLE OF STIRLING BRIDGE

Wallace could not have been much more than 21 years of age when the two armies came together seven hundred years ago, on September 11, 1297, at the City of Stirling, close by THE ROAD. The English army was the greatest fighting unit of its time. Many had fought in the crusades and

in Europe. It was an army that had never known defeat. They were contemptuous of the Scots force and could not wait to come to grips. It was the custom in Medieval times when two armies came together to attempt to negotiate terms to avoid the battle. According to one source, at this time Wallace was offered a pardon, lands and castles and the crown of Scotland if he would enter into Edwards Peace and be subservient to the English King. Greatly outnumbered, and with a rag tag army, ill disciplined and poorly armed with home made weapons, Wallace refused to negotiate, stating that they were there to show the English that Scotland was free. "Tell your people to come up when they like. They will find us ready to meet them in their beards".

Since the English were supremely confident, they gave little thought to tactics, as they set out to crush the Scots once and for all. They could have crossed the huge army at the Ford of Frew, where they could move the army slowly but safely. Instead under Cressingham, they advanced across the narrow Stirling Bridge, where THE ROAD crosses the River Forth, foot soldiers first, then great numbers of armoured cavalry on huge warhorses. There was room only for two horses abreast. Wallace chose his position well. He had his men on the high ground of Abbey Craig overlooking the River Forth at the edge of marshland. He held back his men until as many of the English forces were across as he thought they could reasonably fight. Perfect judgement was critical. If they struck too soon, a significant army would be waiting, ready to fight on the other side of the river. If they allowed too many to cross, they may not manage to defeat them. When the moment seemed right the Scots hurled themselves upon the enemy. They were mostly afoot and emerging from the marshes beside the bridge.

A lightning strike was made by the Scots to cut off head of the bridge. The huge English warhorses that were across could not function in the mud and reared in panic when attacked, throwing the English force into confusion. Those on the bridge were pushed forward by those behind, while being crushed by those ahead trying to retreat. In vain they tried to turn around. Some threw themselves off the bridge only to drown in the river, as their armour pulled them under the waters. When those English who had not crossed the bridge saw

the slaughter and Cressingham, among the dead, they fled in disarray. No prisoners were taken. The English dead was put at some four hundred knights and archers, and five thousand footsoldiers. Scots losses were negligible, although Moray died of his wounds. The English leader, the Earl of Surrey, abandoned his army and galloped all the way to the English borders. The retreating army was harried all the way to the English border and lost another five thousand men in retreat. This battle was followed by the surrender of Dundee Castle and the total expulsion of the English from Scotland.

Soon after this there was a meeting of Scottish nobles at which the very young William Wallace was elected Regent of Scotland, in the Name of King John Balliol, who was captive in England. Due to years of war and English plundering, Scotland was impoverished, so Wallace led a large force into England in search of booty.

When Edward I returning from France, heard of the Scots raiding England he was furious. He raised a force of 100,000 footsoldiers and 8,000 cavalry and went to seek vengeance on the Scots.

Retreating ahead of this massive force, Wallace adopted a scorched earth policy, taking all cattle and crops as he went, trying to starve the English. The English had just about had enough, and were ready to retreat when the plans of Wallace were betrayed by two Scottish nobles. The traitors told the Bishop of Durham that Wallace intended to surprise the English with an attack in the night . On hearing this, Edward immediately ordered his army to advance, taking the Scottish forces, about one third their size, by surprise at Falkirk, a few miles from THE ROAD. A major shock to the Scots was when Comyn, the Lord of Badenoch, turned his banners and marched off the field with his men, including one thousand light cavalry. They constituted a critical part of the Scottish army. Wallace told his remaining troops "I have brought you to the ring - dance if you can". The Scots were defeated, leaving among the dead, Sir John the Graham. Wallace managed to retreat and, laying waste to the lands around Stirling, kept out of English hands and forced them to withdraw for want of food and supplies.

Finding the Scottish nobles against him, Wallace recognized that Scotland needed a leader who could unite the country, and it was not him. He resigned the Regency, and left for France

and Rome, looking for support for Scotland. Popular in the French Court because his success against pirates which at the time infested European seas, yet he was unable to get help, and returned to Scotland in 1303, where he continued harassing the English forces, with the help of a few faithful friends and veteran campaigners.

Edward had now led five armies across the borders, and had succeeded, for the moment in subduing the Scots. Scottish nobles and bishops too had from time to time sworn oaths of allegiance to King Edward and then rebelled again. Each time they were accepted back with some penance and pardoned. The Scottish nobles now submitted to him and were pardoned for their past "misdeeds". No such pardon was offered to Wallace who was still at large and a heroic figure to the common people. Wallace alone never swore allegiance to King Edward. He was always the King's enemy. Always.

BETRAYAL AND MARTYRDOM

A ransom of three hundred Merks was offered for the capture of Wallace. By treachery, one of his servants, Jack Short, betrayed him into the hands of the Scottish Baron, John Monteith. Wallace was Godfather to two of Monteith's children and mistakenly trusted him. For his services to the King, Monteith received a land grant with an annual value of one hundred pounds sterling.

In the year 1305 Wallace was captured near Glasgow, this time never to escape again. Bound to a horse, he was taken under heavy guard along THE ROAD to Dumbarton Castle for interrogation before being sent to a cruel death in London, England. With an armed escort of fifty soldiers Wallace passed not thirty meters from the site of my family's home. It makes no sense but I still feel guilty that I was not there hiding among the ancient beech trees to help him escape. His great sword remained in Dumbarton Castle until 1869 when it was transferred to the Wallace Monument erected in his memory by an ever grateful nation.

On reaching London he was taken to Westminster Hall and formally accused of treason. A crown of laurel was placed on his head, since they said that he had aspired to the Scottish throne. The King's Justice then impeached him as a traitor to Edward I, and Wallace answered:

"... I cannot be a traitor, for I owe him no allegiance. He is not my

sovereign; he never received my
homage; and while there is life in this persecuted body, he shall never receive
it. To all other points
whereof I am accused, I freely confess them all, As Governor of my country I
have mortally opposed
the English King; I have stormed and taken towns and castles which he unjustly
claimed as his own.
If I, or my soldiers have plundered or done injury to the houses or ministers
of religion, I repent of my
sin; but it is not of Edward of England I shall ask pardon."

It was prearranged that Wallace be found guilty. The sentence was carried out
the same day. He was dragged
on a hurdle through the streets of London, abused by the population, to
Smithfield where a gallows was set
up. He was hanged for a short time and cut down, still conscious. He was
castrated and his intestines torn out
and burned in front of him. At last his living heart was plucked out then his
liver, lungs and other organs
removed one by one, each held up to the roaring approval of the huge crowd.
Finally his head was cut off and
his body hacked into quarters by a large cleaver. The various parts of Wallace
were displayed in various towns
around the country. His left arm was hung in Stirling. A local tradition tells
that when the flesh had fallen off
the arm, the monks of Cambuskenneth Abbey on a dark stormy night retrieved
these remains and buried it in
the grounds of the Abbey, pointing to Abbey Craig, the site of his greatest
victory. On that site today stands
the magnificent Wallace Monument.

All his life he steadfastly refused all honours and awards except for his
kighthood. When he was Regent of
Scotland he took no lands or estates, no vassals or crowns. The one goal of his
life was the freedom of
Scotland. When he died, William Wallace was twenty nine years of age. He
accepted his fate as he had lived,
courageously, winning admiration even from enemies. His name will not be
forgotten.

In those days when a leader was taken in battle he was usually ransomed off.
Such was the hatred King Edward
of England had for Wallace, that he insisted on this execution for him. His
fate made him a martyr in the eyes
of his people and through Wallace's death Robert the Bruce was to succeed in
rallying and uniting the country
in a bid for independence.

William Wallace; you gave took so little and gave so much. Even now after seven

hundred years you make
each countryman proud to be a Scot.

The life of Wallace passed through many stages. He was in turn an outlaw, a folk hero, a martyr and finally a legend. And legends live forever.

FOOTNOTE

There is an interesting aspect to the story of William Wallace. Some scholars believe that behind every myth, there is a real person. Consider this. Wallace had an extremely large brother John, referred to by his friends as Little John, who went into hiding with him and his band. Another member was a faithful fighting abbot John Blair. Wallace was famous for his great sword but was a master of the martial weapons of his day. His sweetheart was named Marian; she was harassed and finally murdered by Heselrig, the wicked Sheriff of Lanark. Wallace led a band of outlaws who made their home in the great Tor Forest. They survived by raiding supply trains destined for their enemies. They violently opposed injustice and tyranny, and fought against great odds. He was a champion of, and loved by, the common people. He was indomitable. There is an obvious parallel to the myth of Robin Hood, with Little John, Friar Tuck, Maid Marian, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Sherwood Forest. In some ways, such as robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, Rob Roy MacGregor would more accurately fit the picture. Perhaps Robin Hood was a composite. Perhaps not. You decide.

Stories of Robert the Bruce, King of Scots

Scotland's Greatest King

THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

This is from the story of an ancient road and events that happened on it. This chapter is about the Scottish

Wars of Independence and King Robert the Bruce. My family name is Boyd and my ancestors were involved in these Wars.

The ambitious King Edward II of England wants to rule England, Ireland, Wales, France and Scotland. In the end he, like all of us, gets seven feet of ground.

Fourteenth Century: ROBERT THE BRUCE -- KING OF SCOTS

William Wallace and Robert the Bruce lived at the same time, but their original goals were quite different. Wallace was motivated by fierce patriotism and bitter hatred of the English invaders. Bruce was at first motivated by personal ambition. The Bruce's were an Anglo-Norman family and Robert's Grandfather was one of three main contenders for the throne of Scotland on the death of King Alexander. Scotland turned to her good neighbour to the South, King Edward of England, as an honest broker to decide who should succeed Alexander as King of

Scotland. Edward had been a good neighbour up to this time but had plans for Scotland and a hidden agenda. He listened carefully to all arguments and advice, then carefully chose John Balliol, the weakest of the three contenders, as the rightful King of Scotland. He was later to use the fact that Scotland had asked him to decide who should be her King, to claim that he therefor had sovereignty over both Scotland and her King, John Balliol. He insisted that Balliol pay homage to him, and when he refused, had him imprisoned.

Robert Bruce grew up in the court of Edward I and looked on him fondly as a kind of Uncle. The fact that Edward was a powerful warrior and was known as the first knight in all Christendom, made him all the more attractive to young Robert. It was in his court that Robert learned his skills with weapons and it was Edward who conferred knighthood on Bruce with his own hands. The Bruce, as Earl of Carrick had sworn allegiance to Edward, but when Wallace started to have military successes, Bruce drew his sword in support of the cause of independence. When Wallace's initial successes stopped, Bruce, along with many other Scottish nobles switched their allegiance back to King Edward who pardoned them.

After the death of Wallace, Bruce took the opportunity, when Edward was away fighting in France, to have himself crowned King of Scotland. He was supported by some but by no means all of the Scottish Lords and Bishops. He was crowned at Scone, by the Countess of Buchan, whose brother held the hereditary right to crown the Kings of Scotland. The brother would have nothing to do with it and was not present. The real crown of Scotland had been stolen by Edward, so it was replaced by a golden circlet. It was in this way that Robert the Bruce began his long journey to fight against the English and attempt to win the love of the Scottish people and gain independence for them.

Edward was enraged by these events and sent a powerful army across the border which totally defeated the Scottish army. Bruce and a few of his followers went into hiding in the mountains of Athol and Argyle. Accompanying Bruce was another young knight, Sir James Douglas, who as the Black Douglas, was to become one of Scotland's best known guerrilla fighters. Another welcome guerrilla fighter was Sir Robert Boyd, now a veteran, with all the experience gained in the Wallace campaigns.

BRUCE IS TESTED

Bruce's lands had been confiscated, his three brothers executed, and the heads

of many who had come out in support of him now were mounted on spikes, as a warning to any who would oppose Edward's will. (included in these numbers was one Douglas Boyd, another ancestor, who was hanged in 1308). Bruce's wife and young daughter were imprisoned in English castles, the Countess of Buchan who had crowned him, was confined in an open wickerwork cage, suspended from the walls of the castle in Berwick.

His forces were down to a pitiful remnant of ten men, and he was despairing of all the dreadful things that had happened to those he loved. It was when things were blackest and he was hiding in a cave that the legend of the spider happened. In the semi darkness he saw a spider spinning a web. The spider was suspended from the roof of the cave by a silver thread and had to reach the far wall. It tried swinging but failed to reach it. The spider persisted and persisted, never for a moment deviating from its purpose, and finally managed to swing itself into position from which it completed its mission. This is the moment when Bruce coined the motto that was in time to become world famous: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

Bruce threw himself back into the fray and was able to gather enough support to start having success. The brutality of Edward had the effect, not of terrorizing, but of disgusting the Scots nobles, clergy, and commoners. They longed to get rid of the English yoke once and for all. They needed a leader and Bruce, having been forged in the fires of a personal hell, was now the man to be that leader. Since he was of Norman blood on his fathers side and Celtic on his mothers side, he was acceptable to both ethnic groups. Having a common enemy helped and the fact that he had a legal and just claim to the crown enabled him to gather a broad base of support. What he did with this support is the stuff of legends.

THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN

Various castles that had been taken by the English were now recaptured and in Scottish control. Perth, Roxborough, and Edinburgh castles were recovered. Then the stronghold of Dumbarton, at one end of THE ROAD was recaptured. Bruce and his army definitely used THE ROAD while besieging Dumbarton Castle. Now at the other end of THE ROAD, the important castle at Stirling was still in the hands of the English and Bruce assigned the job of besieging it to his brother Edward Bruce. This

brother was a wonderful fighter, but not too smart and very impatient. The slow job of putting a well provisioned castle under siege was not to his liking. When the English governor of the castle, a brave man named Oliphant, gave him a chivalrous challenge, he accepted. Oliphant proposed that if they lifted the siege, and if the castle was not relieved by English forces within a one year period, he would surrender the castle. The date was set for the twenty fourth day of June, in the year 1314.

Robert Bruce was very angry with his brother Edward for making this arrangement, but agreement had been made and he stood behind it. This gave the English a full year to gather support from all over Europe and come with overwhelming odds to crush the Scots. Before this year was out and only eight years after Wallace's grisly death, Edward I, the Hammer of the Scots, died, still having failed in his ambition to annex Scotland. If Christian belief is true both Wallace and King Edward have to answer to their Creator for their lives. Both had killed many, but which would you rather be?

So much hatred did he have for the Scots that he demanded of his son that on his death, his bones be rendered (the meat boiled off them) and that they be wrapped in a bulls hide and carried into the next battle with the Scots. The son, Edward II, was of a different nature from his Father. While he controlled the might of England, and had all the same Lords and Barons fighting for him, and was relatively brave, he was not nearly as aggressive or tough as his father. He had a wife and a male lover and this was to cause him future problems with his nobles and with his wife. In any case, he ignored his father's wishes and had the King's remains buried in the normal way.

In preparation for the battle Edward I and II both wrote to many European knights, some of whom were indebted to the English monarchy, offering them a chance for glory and looting in subduing the Scots. He raised the largest army ever to enter Scotland, and they were supremely confident. Some treated it as a great outing and brought their families to watch the spectacle. Many brought the best family silverware for the celebrations anticipated after the battle. This huge force with all its long supply train travelled slowly Northward.

The site that Bruce chose for his battle with the English was at Bannockburn, close to Stirling Castle and a few miles South of THE ROAD. He drilled his smaller Scottish army, most of whom were to fight in four large Schiltrons (a diamond shape formation of men) with twelve foot long spears. Each soldier dug the heel of his spear into the ground and formed a sort of hedgehog to face the charging heavy cavalry. A military innovation was to train these schiltrons to be moveable. They could pull up here and regroup where they were most needed. The site was bordered by the Bannock Burn (the English were not aware that this was a tidal river) and two huge swamps. The Scottish side had dug many pits and traps with hidden wooden stakes.

The day before battle was joined Bruce, lightly armored, was inspecting the battlefield on a small horse. An English knight, Sir Henry de Bohun, in full armour and mounted on a huge warhorse spotted the small gold circlet on Bruce's head and recognized him. Here was his chance for glory! He lowered his lance and charged at once. Seeing the attack, Bruce turned his nimble little horse around and rising in his stirrups, with one blow of his battle axe, clove de Bohun's head in two. Returning to his troops, Bruce was upbraided for taking such risks and asked if he did not see the hazard in what he had done. Bruce coolly replied "It certainly is a problem, I have broken my favourite battle axe."

The English army spent the eve of the battle of revelry, eagerly anticipating victory the next day. The Scots spent it in "silence and devotion". The English attack started with a hail of arrows, from the now famous Welsh longbows, but Bruce had a small band of light cavalry and used them to disperse the archers. When hand to hand fighting was engaged defenders had more room to manoeuvre as the English were caught in a tight wedge. The horses and knights were injured in pits, stakes and schiltrons, had insufficient room, and were bogged down in the mud. Knights fell and could not rise, hampered by heavy armour. The battle raged for hours, but the final rout came for the English (as every Scottish schoolboy knows) when the Scottish gillies, servants, and women camp followers watching from a safe distance, thinking the Scots had won, came racing out shouting Bruce's battle cry. The English thought that this was reinforcements and fled for their lives. The Bannock Burn was now at high water and many drowned trying to cross it, others

were caught in the bogs.

King Edward II fought bravely, but when all seemed lost left the field in full flight with a rear guard party of nobles. He sought admission at Stirling Castle, but was refused, as the keeper pointed out he had agreed to surrender the castle. The English party fled for home, crossing THE ROAD, pursued by a party led by the Black Douglas. Edward II narrowly escaped, but returned home to future problems, including the murder of his male lover by other nobles, an uprising by his wife and her lover who raised an army and attacked Edward.

Bannockburn was the greatest defeat that the English suffered at the hands of the Scots. The victory provide the Scots with a great deal of ransom money as English noble families sought to retrieve their loved ones.

Bruce was always generous with his supporters, and the silverware left in the battlefield graced many Scottish homes for centuries afterwards. The main victory however, was that of independence from the English.

For many years Robert the Bruce stood excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church and not recognized as Scotland's rightful King by the Church in Rome, although the brilliant leaders of Scotlands Church stood behind him at great risk to themselves. It took some years of border raiding and harassing the North of England but eventually Bruce won recognition from Edward, the other Kings of Europe, and the Pope, for the independence of Scotland and for himself as King of the Scots.

A HERO'S END

Bruce saw the fulfillment of his own and William Wallace's vision of an independent Scotland, a nation of free people. He died at age fifty four. He had a peaceful old age in Cardross, just north of THE ROAD, where he loved to sail on the River Clyde.

One of the most famous stories of medieval chivalry tells how, as a last wish, Bruce asked that his heart be taken on the crusade against the Saracens. He had always wanted to join the crusades but had sacrificed this wish in order to defend his country. His closest friend, Sir James Douglas, better known as The Black Douglas, a legendary knight and Bruce's sword arm for twenty years, undertook the task. He carried the heart in a silver casket around his neck. He was enroute to the Holy Land with a small band of Scottish knights, but

in Northern Spain when they responded to a sudden call of chivalry, joining the hard pressed Christians who were fighting the Moors. Crying "Forward, brave heart, as thou always did ... Douglas will follow thee or die", he threw the casket far into the heart of the battle, following it as he had so often done. Douglas was killed in the moment of victory, and lies buried there. Bruce's heart was returned to where it belonged, his native Scotland.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of national feeling in Scotland, accompanied by an increase in music and arts. Around the World things Celtic are becoming more universally popular. In Scotland for centuries it was customary to open or close all public events with the playing or singing of the British National Anthem, God Save the Queen. By popular acclaim, a new song has replaced this official anthem in Scotland, and is given strong voice in all international sporting events, especially when Scotland fields a team against England:

FLOWER OF SCOTLAND

OH, FLOWER OF SCOTLAND, WHEN WILL WE SEE YOUR LIKE AGAIN,
THAT FOUGHT AND DIED FOR YOUR WEE BIT HILL AND GLEN,
AND STOOD AGAINST HIM PROUD EDWARD'S ARMY,
AND SENT HIM HOMEWARD, TAE THINK AGAIN.

THE HILLS ARE BARE NOW AND AUTUMN LEAVES LIE THICK AND STILL.
O'ER LAND THAT IS LOST NOW WHICH THEY SO DEARLY HELD,
AND STOOD AGAINST THEM, PROUD EDWARD'S ARMY,
AND SENT HIM HOMEWARD, TAE THINK AGAIN.

THOSE DAYS ARE PAST NOW AND IN THE PAST THEY MUST REMAIN,
BUT WE CAN STILL RISE NOW AND BE THE NATION AGAIN,
THAT STOOD AGAINST HIM, PROUD EDWARD'S ARMY,
AND SENT HIM HOMEWARD, TAE THINK AGAIN.

Chorus

-- Roy Williamson (the Corries)

THE DECLARATION OF ARBROATH

In the year 1320, the Abbot of Arbroath wrote an appeal to the Pope asking for recognition of Scotland as an independent Nation and Robert the Bruce as its rightful King. It carried

the seals of eight earls and
31 barons and was written in the name of the community of the realm. It is a
memorable document
and says, in part:

But, after all, if this prince shall leave these principles he has so nobly
pursued and consent that we of our
Kingdom be subjected to the King or people of England, we will immediately
endeavor to expel him as our
enemy and as the subverter both of his own and our rights and will make another
King who will defend
our liberties: for so long as there shall be but one hundred of us remain alive
we will never give consent
to subject ourselves to the dominion of the English. For it is not glory, it is
not riches, neither is it honour,
but it is freedom alone that we fight and contend for, which no honest man will
lose but with his life.

THE MOVIE BRAVEHEART

While Hollywood takes many liberties with history, the ending of the movie
Braveheart was true and moving.
In a voice over narration, Mel Gibson said: "In the year of our Lord, 1314,
patriots of Scotland, starving
and outnumbered, charged the fields of Bannockburn. They fought like
warrior-poets. They fought like
Scotsmen and won their freedom."

Stories of the Clan MacGregor and of Rob Roy MacGregor

Scotland's Best Loved Outlaw

THE MACGREGOR CLAN AND ROB ROY

The 1996 popular movie starring Liam Neeson and Jessica Lange has caused the
name of Rob Roy MacGregor to be known throughout the world. For centuries, it
has been a household name in Scotland.

Robert Roy MacGregor (Roy means red, Mac or Mc means the son of) was born into
the MacGregor Clan which, as young people would say today, had an attitude. He
was a very real person but around his many adventures, romantic legends have
grown making it difficult to separate reality from fiction. He was a fearless
fighter and adventurer who became a leader of the Clan Gregor, a proud clan
which claims an ancient and Royal origin in Celtic history. We shall talk about
him a little later but first, the MacGregor saga.

The song MacGregors Gathering tells their story well:

MACGREGORS GATHERING

The moon's on the lake and the mist's on the brae,
And the Clan has a name that is nameless by day.

Our signal for fight, that from monarchs we drew,
Must be heard but by night, to our dreadful halloo.
Then halloo, halloo, halloo, Gragalach.
If they rob us of name, and pursue us with beagles,
Give their roofs to the flame, and their flesh to the eagles!
Then gather, gather, gather.
Gather, gather, gather.
While there's leaves in the forest, and foam on the river,
MacGregor, despite them, shall flourish forever.

-- Sir Walter Scott

I heard this song from an early age, not with mother's milk, but with Father's beer. Twenty years before the advent of television, on a Friday evening, Father would bring home a few "screwtops", gather the family around a coal fire in the living room, and we would have a sing song. For dramatic effect, this MacGregors Gathering had to be sung waving a threatening poker (fire iron) as a substitute claymore.

click on any picture for larger image

Allan Sharp, a distant relative of Rob Roy (see note) who still lives in Scotland, provided the above images and the following description. See also a brief mention of this cave at Wikipedia.

The photo on the right shows the location of the cave at Inversnaid, the top left what it looks like from the outside, and the bottom left photo is that of a mold that was taken from an inscription on the cave wall away at the very back that seems to show "R Mc". It was a friend of mine from Seattle, now deceased, who made a silicone mold then cast a resin positive. I have been in the cave with the aforementioned friend prior to his discovery of the lettering on the cave wall. I am certain that it was done by Roy MacGregor himself. Note the date 1716. I don't know what happened to the "G," however "R Mc" is enough to convince me, not to mention the fact that I know of no other who has ever found or knows of the inscription. [-A.S.]

The MacGregors claim descent from Gregor, third son of Alpin King of Scots, who ruled about 787 AD. They are one of the most ancient clans in the Highlands and once held vast tracts land in Perthshire and Argyleshire. They persisted in holding on to their land despite Royal grants over the years giving much of it to other, more powerful, more "civilized", and more favoured clans. The Earls of Argyle and Breadalbane led two groups of the Clan Campbell, were especially favoured by the Kings and the law. But the Campbells were not alone in this. MacGregors were surrounded by powerful enemies, Colquhouns, Murrays, Drummonds, Grahams, and Stewarts. The power seeking princes of these Clans included two dukes, two marquises,

three earls, and a baronet, all of whom at one time or another held high office in government. With little regard to justice, they usurped MacGregor lands. The MacGregors, on the other hand, imprudently claimed that "the right of the sword" superseded the right of law. The MacGregors were often to experience the severity of the law, but never its protection.

Their Chief had an impossible situation to manage. The Clan Gregor lands were spread in parcels from the rolling hills of Perthshire to the mountains and glens of Argyle. With the expansion of other, more powerful Clans like the Campbells, (who arrived from Ireland centuries later than the MacGregors, fought the Saxons and the Vikings, then settled in Argyle), members of the MacGregor Clan were often reduced to the role of tenant farmers, owing allegiance to a landlord as well as to their Chief, MacGregor of Glenstrae. Not only were they expected to pay rent to the landlord, they were expected to fight on his behalf in the inter clan squabbles which were common all over the Highlands.

The house where Rob Roy was born,
or another house later built on the same spot.
(photo by A. Sharp)

The original MacGregor burial site. The page Trossachs Burial Grounds explains: The enclosure seen here was erected by Victorian engineers who raised the level of the loch. The rising waters threatened the ancient burial ground, so the whole enclosure was re-built on an artificial island and the entrance linteled.
(photo by Allan Sharp)

[click on any picture for larger image](#)

The Chief of the Clan Gregor was responsible by law for the actions of all his widely scattered clansmen in other lands, where he had little knowledge of these actions, much less control over them. It is not surprising then that MacGregors were associated with much of the raiding and fighting which was part of the way of life in the Highlands four centuries ago. Regardless of the feud, it was difficult to have a fight without MacGregors showing up for it.

The 16th Century was disastrous for the MacGregors. Neighbouring Clans tried to hunt them down in 1562, and then again in 1564. When James VI assumed the throne of Scotland he had plans for the MacGregors, whom he called the "wicked and unhappy race of the Clan Gregour". An Act of the Privy Council outlawed the clan, in which "letters of fire and sword" were pronounced against them in favour of Clan Campbell, for a period of three years. These grants were to be renewed at intervals for a total period of one hundred and thirty years. It was a policy of genocide. Though they were gradually deprived of all ordinary means of subsistence, the McGregors did not starve, because they could take from strangers what they rightfully considered their own. They became well versed in predatory expeditions and accustomed to bloodshed.

Even their very name was abolished. No-one could use the name MacGregor,

because the King said that the use of it caused its members "to presume of their power, force, and strength" thereby encouraging them in law breaking.

Not much happened immediately, but within one year the Chief and eleven Clansmen were hanged in Edinburgh. It happened this way. The Earl of Argyle, head of the Clan Campbell, and Chief Justiciar for Scotland, managed to become a trusted mentor and neighbour to the then Chief, Alister MacGregor. MacGregor was greatly distressed by the hardships being imposed on his people. On Argyle's advice he volunteered to accept all blame for his fellow Clansmen, surrender himself along with his principal followers to his friend Argyle, on condition that they be sent in exile out of Scotland. Argyle pledged on his honour to do this. As they travelled from Argyle's country, passing along THE ROAD, they did not have any idea that they were to be betrayed, and were thinking that their unselfish act would alleviate the suffering of their Clan.

At the time Birrell expressed it, he kept a Highlandman's promise, fulfilling it to the ear, and breaking it to the sense. The MacGregors were sent under strong guard from Edinburgh to the North of England, thus literally out of the country, then brought back to Edinburgh where on 20 January, 1604. They were tried and hanged on the same day. In recognition of his station, the chief was hanged higher, by his own height, than his Clansmen. Argyle considered he had kept his vow. For his services to the crown in this matter, the Earl of Argyle was rewarded by Parliament with a grant of twenty chalders of victual out of the lands of Kintyre.

A price of one thousand merks was put on the heads of other leaders of the Clan, 100 merks for lesser members, and pardons were offered for every Clansman to bring in the head of another member of equal rank. MacGregors took names of other Clans, perhaps from their wives, other relatives, or neighbouring Clans. They tried to survive as best they could.

Hunting of MacGregors continued over the years. There were efforts made to force MacGregor Clan women and children to settle in the Lowlands. Some MacGregor women were even branded on their faces. The carrying of weapons was prohibited, and Clansmen were not allowed to gather in groups of more than four. Some other Clans were angry at this treatment and were willing to dare the King's disapproval by providing shelter and protection. Persecution of the Clan lasted throughout the sixteenth century and into the next, yet such was the tenacity of the people that the Clan survived and retained its identity.

The Clan did not accept persecution peacefully. They fought back and, striking in the night, they made their tormentors pay dearly. Because of their cruel treatment, they were quick to take offense and capable of great fury and violence.

By outlawing an entire Clan, the King produced many broken men who had nothing to lose, with no honest means of making a living. The countryside was to experience a great increase in brigandage, cattle stealing, murders and many other expressions of social breakdown, not dissimilar to that experienced among the poor in the major cities of highly developed countries today.

Over the centuries the MacGregors used THE ROAD to drive the black Highland cattle to market. Their own, and other people's too.

ROB ROY MACGREGOR: HIS EARLY DAYS

Rob Roy MacGregor was born in February 1671, third son of Donald Glas (or pale, from the colour of his skin), a chief of Clan MacGregor and his wife Mary Campbell. He was descended from Chieftains of both Clan Gregor of Glengyle and Clan Campbell of Glenlyon. The eldest son, Iain, would have completed university, since this was the normal course for a chief's eldest son.

Donald's house would be the largest in Glengyle, measuring about fifteen feet by seventy feet on the inside. The floor was of packed earth. An end quarter of the house would be to shelter the farm animals in winter. This end was partitioned off from the rest of the house by thick boards. Furniture was sparse with a table, shelves, some benches and stools, chests, and some box beds with mattresses of straw. All gentlemen of the Clan would have books and Donald would have twenty or so volumes in French, Latin and English. A large bible in English would be among them, for the first Gaelic Bible was then being edited in nearby Balquhiddy by the local clergyman. Donald would read to his family from the Bible every day.

The Christening ceremony for Rob would provide food for everyone along with whisky and ale and there would be a ceilidh (music and dance) at night. Several hundred guests would attend from many miles around. They would bring a gift of food and ask for a blessing on the house when they arrived, and those for afar would be provided with floor space to sleep at night. The menfolk arriving would wear leather brogues, resembling the dress wear of today except that the holes were not for decoration but to let water out, for there were few roads apart from footpaths and almost no bridges in the Highlands. In fact Scotland had no roads that would take a coach and travelers had to go by boat, on horseback or on foot. Mail between towns went by runners. On these rough paths and drove roads, horses could go no faster than foot runners.

The Chief's large house was built by the community and it was a kind of

combination home and town hall. Often it would be packed but any night it would have people discussing their problems with their chief. Rob would go to sleep at night to the drone of voices coming over the top of the room partitions. His family was encompassed by loving friends and their attitude sank deep in his heart and bound him for life to the people of his Clan. Not all was business and there was always time for poetry, song, and the music of chanter, fiddle, and bagpipes. The bards sang in praise of heroism, but also praised courage, wisdom, honour, and kindness to the needy and weak. Rob's joyful nature and values which helped him throughout his difficult life, were formed here. He also learned to distrust the corrupt Scottish Parliament and the ploys of powerful Clans who continually tried to usurp MacGregor lands.

Rob was blessed with eighteen years of peace in which to grow up, since Clan wars had ended, the Civil War had stopped, and the religious Covenanters were dormant for now.

In 1688 after the Stuart King (the Kings were now rulers of Scotland, England, and Ireland, as the Union of the Crowns had taken place) was deposed, the throne was offered to William of Orange, a Dutchman, and his wife Mary. He accepted with alacrity and was manipulated into signing the order for the massacre of Glencoe, demanding that all MacDonalds under the age of 70, be put to the sword in the highland glens of Glencoe. He was also the King Billy responsible for finally defeating the Roman Catholic forces of King James at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland. The first is still being grieved, the second is refought every time the Rangers soccer team plays the Celtic, and when the pubs close in Glasgow. Catholic-Protestant bigotry is still very much alive in the lowlands of Scotland.

Shortly after William acceding to the throne, there was a Rising of the Highland Clans who felt bound to King James Stuart. A proud moment for young Rob was in 1689, when he fought alongside his father in the famous Battle of Killiecrankie. Actually it was not much more than a moment, because after much marching and maneuvers and positioning troops, one Highland charge so terrified the Southern Army that it fled in disarray. The Highlanders were wonderful fighters, skilled in hand to hand combat, but their leadership was poor. This victory was quickly followed by a series of reversals for the Jacobites and the Rising was soon over. After the Battle of the Boyne, the Stuart Cause was lost.

King William offered pardon for any gentlemen willing to swear allegiance to

him. Rob's Father refused to do this, feeling still honour bound to the deposed King James in exile in France. Later when the Rising was over, this stand for the Jacobite cause was to lead to imprisonment for treason for Rob's Father and for Rob to have Jacobite sympathies for life. Rob's Father was victimized in being imprisoned since so many other, more influential, people were by passed for taking the same stand.

As an adult, Rob Roy was quite literate and fluent in Gaelic, English, and Latin. He was physically a powerful man, of medium height, with unusually long arms, considerable strength, and athletic ability. His long arms gave him advantage in quickly retrieving the dagger from his stocking or wielding his broadsword in open fight. He lived in an age when his clan held what land it could by the law of the sword, and stealing cattle or "reiving" was an accepted custom.

The cattle in the highlands were small black animals who were wild and lived very much like the deer, often running free. Lifting or reiving was not seen as stealing in the Highlands. It was a means of surviving and there was an unwritten code of honour in place whereby cattle were lifted mostly from those who could afford it, and never was anyone left destitute without means of survival. Almost always some cattle were left. The people of the Highlands did not need much cash money to exist. The life of the Highlander was simple and the land and animals provided almost all of their needs. Nothing was wasted. The sale of cattle provided for the few things that were needed beyond what was to be had locally and for the occasional luxury item. Cattle were a cash crop. Reiving was also a dangerous adventure whereby young men could prove themselves without going to battle and unnecessary loss of life.

A sharing system was in place within the clans, and Rob Roy as a leader always saw to it that those in need were taken care of. The poor, the needy and the sick were taken care of anonymously, with a leg of mutton dropped off in the night here and a sack of grain or a hind of beef there. He became so loved by the people that when he was later outlawed, they were actively on his side and none would betray him despite threats and offers of reward from the authorities. Fear of retribution

may also have played a part.

Since the MacGregor clan was smaller than many of its more powerful neighbours, they had to be tenacious to survive, and none were more tenacious than Rob Roy.

THE BLACK WATCH

Rob Roy was an insurance salesman. From his Highland stronghold he visited Southern, more affluent neighbours, who owned large herds of cattle, to make an offer which they could not, in self interest, refuse. His rates were reasonable and he was scrupulously fair, his word was his bond. For the annual payment of a premium of a few shillings per head of cattle, he said that their stock would not be stolen. If it was stolen he guaranteed to get it back, or replace it with another herd of equal or greater value. Since Highland cattle were black, the term "blackmail" was devised to describe such transactions. This whole system was approved by the government since they were powerless to provide any protection to cattle owners. It was needed badly, and when at times it was withdrawn, anarchy reigned in the cattle business, and it had to be reinstated. Later, a regiment of soldiers was instituted, that was to become very famous, called the Black Watch. Its original purpose was to prevent cattle reiving and blackmail, and it was comprised entirely of Highlanders. The operating principle was "it takes a Highlander to catch a Highlander".

Rob was made an acting leader of the Watch. His honest dealing was matched by outstanding tracking skills. The MacRaes of Kintail had lifted fifteen head of cattle belonging to Breadalbane. It was not much, but it was an embarrassment to the great man. He hired Rob to recover the animals. Rob arrived on the scene with a dozen men and the disadvantage of being two days behind the culprits. He followed their trail through the Mamlorn Forest, over the Rannoch Hills, and deep into mountains held by his enemies, the MacPhersons. The trail had become so faint that by nightfall on the second day it looked like a lost cause. His band camped for the night, then a flicker of firelight was seen far above them. They scouted the source and found a band of gypsies who informed them that higher up still was a band of Highlanders. Upon investigation this proved to be the reiving MacRaes. There was a brief fight, with honour satisfied as blood was drawn on both sides. The MacRaes withdrew and the cattle were returned to their owner. In all he had tracked them for over a hundred miles over extremely difficult terrain.

The story of this accomplishment spread far and wide throughout the South and established Rob's reputation. The lairds and owners of many large herds were anxious to place themselves under Rob's protection and he was able to increase the size of his following without causing his neighbours to be nervous. This feat was to stand him in well in future years when many landowners were to trust him with large sums of money, and even on occasion give him land.

When another grant was issued and the letters of fire and sword renewed against the MacGregors, Rob Roy was forced to take another surname. He used the name Robert Campbell. At first it sounds strange that Rob would choose the Campbell name, although his mother was a Campbell. It was more likely a devious method of requiring the Duke of Argyll to provide him with protection.

THE HARRYING OF KIPPEN

When Rob Roy was about twenty years old his much loved father was being held in jail where he had been for two years. He was quite ill, for confinement was no life for a Highland gentleman. A large fine was outstanding against him and money was in short supply. Throughout Scotland there was only 180,000 pounds sterling in circulation. Sir Alexander Livingstone, whose family included Earls of Linlithgow and Callander, had refused to pay the Blackmail (insurance) and Rob, as a leader in the Watch, legally set up by the Government thought that he had to be made an example of. If Livingstone was able to stop paying his insurance and nothing happened to him, pretty soon everyone would stop paying. Rob devised a plan.

With twenty well armed MacGregors, Rob was lurking on the outskirts of the town of Kippen. The townsmen were alarmed at the presence of the Highlanders, but did not realize these were the fierce MacGregors. About a hundred townsmen armed themselves with pitchforks and clubs and at dusk marched against the waiting clansmen. They shouted insults and Rob had all he could do to hold his men in check while trying to fend off the townsmen to avoid their massacre. Before disaster could happen, they heard the sound they were awaiting. The unmistakable noise of the herd of 200 of Livingstone's prime cattle being driven from the market in Stirling. The MacGregors attacked the herdsmen and guards and made off with the cattle, with nobody injured beyond a few lumps and bruises. The herd vanished, leaving no trace. (The MacGregor's ability to disappear into the terrain with or without a herd of cattle was so highly developed that they were known as the Children of the Mist) This incident was referred to as the Herdship (harrying) of Kippen. It was to make a name for the young Rob, the powerful Livingstone was outfoxed and made an example of, nobody killed, the reputation of the Watch maintained, and the proceeds of the adventure later secured his father's release from prison.

HOW ROB FIRST BECAME AN OUTLAW

The most powerful Lords in this area of Scotland at this time were The Duke of

Athol, the Marquis of Queensbury, the Duke of Argyle, The Earl of Breadalbane, and the Duke of Montrose. These powerful lords had the power of pit and gallows and were continually manipulating people and events to gain land and power. They were often plotting against each other and exploiting others as pawns in their schemes.

Rob Roy was an outstanding drover and hired out as Chief Drover for The Duke of Montrose. In this capacity, he often drove his cattle along THE ROAD to Dumbarton or Stirling. He was performing a good, honest job for a number of years. Then he borrowed a huge sum of 1,000 pounds sterling from Montrose to buy cattle himself to fatten and sell in the market. He was grievously effected by a trusted employee who sold the cattle, and disappeared with the money, never to be heard of again. This was a terrible loss for which Rob Roy was held responsible, with no hopes of ever repaying. There is more than a possibility that Montrose had a hand in the disappearance of the man and the money. It suited his ends nicely.

At one time Montrose offered to forgive the money owed to him by Rob Roy in exchange for Rob swearing that the Duke of Argyle was a Jacobite (i.e. supporter of the Stuart cause, and opposed to King William). Rob stood on principle and would not lie even although he had no liking for the Duke of Argyle. This outraged Montrose and made of him an enormously powerful lifetime enemy. Rob Roy was to prove a valiant and ingenious adversary. Argyle was later to become a supporter of Rob and he and Breadalbane were to claim that they were helpless to stop Rob Roy's cattle reiving against Montrose, although he was living on their land at the time. It is more than possible their hatred for Montrose was stronger than any love for Rob, and they did this to suit their own ends at the time.

Rob's personal outlaw career started officially about this time, when in 1713, Montrose sent out a troop of soldiers during Rob Roy's absence, who burned the MacGregor house to the ground and drove off or killed all livestock. They took all goods that were moveable and threw the rest into the fire. Rob's

family were distraught and he felt ashamed that he had been unable to protect them. There were rumours that Rob Roy's wife was raped during this villainous act, the family were certainly roughed up.

With MacGregor's history of legal persecution and injustice, Rob Roy had no great respect for the law of the land. Up to this point he had attempted to be a more or less law abiding citizen, from now onward he was wholehearted about being an outlaw. Rob took to the hills and continued his adventures.

MONTROSE HAS TO PAY, AND PAY

Rob found a safe place for his family on a farm in a remote glen in Balquhidder. The next thing Rob decided was that Montrose had to pay. His station as a Duke mattered not one whit to Rob. In those days rents were paid annually, not in money but in goods, cattle being the most common currency. Rob carefully calculated what he figured the Duke owed him for lost buildings, household goods, livestock and crops, then proceeded to collect. He found out when Montrose's factors were going to collect rents from tenants on his vast land holdings and personally visited those tenants about one week before rent day. He collected the rent due, and issued an elaborate receipt from himself and the Duke of Montrose. The factors could rant and rage as much as they liked, but the tenants could not afford to pay twice.

Some tenants did not hold with Rob's system of early rent collection and gathered the rent animals for several of them ahead of time and kept them in a secure place. Rob Roy took the animals from under their noses and they were left without the protection of a receipt of any kind.

Montrose was a nasty, gouging, type of landlord, only too fond of raising rents and evicting tenants who could not pay. Rob discussed the rents with Montrose's tenants and asked them if they thought them to be too high. Almost all said that they did. Rob then asked what they considered a fair rent would be, and they settled on a figure. From then on Rob collected the fair rent, but gave a receipt, from Montrose and himself, for the higher figure. These receipts gave the tenants some protection from the furious Montrose. The government was not able to provide any protection to cattle owners like Montrose and

all he got from them was a message of condolence for his losses.

One day Rob Roy came upon a poor widow who was about to be evicted for being unable to pay taxes owed to the "Factor" of the Duke of Montrose. She requested Rob Roy's help, "for auld lang syne". Out of his own purse, Rob Roy generously gave the woman money with which to pay her taxes. He told her to make sure that she got a written receipt for the money. Then he waited for the Factor on the road to Stirling and robbed him of all his tax money. There was nothing that Montrose could do about it. The widow had her receipt. He was a real life Robin Hood. This incident probably took place at a secluded place along THE ROAD. Perhaps even close by an ancient grove of beech trees.

THE SWORDSMAN

Rob had a short temper, was quick to take offense and capable of holding a grudge, but generally had a cheerful and forgiving nature. In an age of dueling he was to fight on no less than twenty two occasions. Such was his reputation as a swordsman that he was even sought out by MacNeil of Barra, thought by some to be the greatest swordsman in Scotland. He travelled all the way from the Western Isles and demanded to test Rob's skills. Having nothing against the man, Rob Reluctantly allowed MacNeil to insult him into fighting then defeated MacNeil by a wound. Honour satisfied, both spent the rest of the night drinking and parted on good terms. It is indicative of his character that he never killed any of his opponents and most of these bouts ended similarly to the one with MacNeil.

ROB, THE JACOBITE

Rob Roy lived through the times of the first major Jacobite uprising, in 1715. The MacGregors always felt a loyalty to the crown of Scotland which their ancestors once wore, sympathizing with the Stuart cause, although the Stuarts did nothing for the MacGregors. Despite their problems, they fielded armies in both the 1715 and 1745 uprisings, choosing the losing side both times. Perhaps the opportunity to raid the low country held a strong appeal. When discussing which side of the civil war Rob Roy had been on, Sir Walter Scott ventured that Rob had been on his own side. He further compared him to the legendary Henry Wynd.

Henry Wynd rose to public attention in earlier times. Two of Scotland's great Clans had a dispute. They agreed to settle it and avoid major bloodshed by each fielding forty men to

represent them in battle.

Many people gathered to watch this spectacle, including the King. On the prearranged day, one Clan was short of their required numbers by one man. They conscripted a short, bandy legged local Blacksmith named Henry Wynd. The story goes that Henry was never sure which of the combatants was on his side, but fought so fiercely that he made a major difference to the outcome of the battle. Eventually there was Henry and one other man left standing. The other man ran away.

ROB ROY, ESCAPE ARTIST

Escape from the Duke of Montrose

Rob Roy was sometimes captured but always managed to escape. On one occasion he was under heavy guard being escorted on horseback with his arms bound to his sides by a heavy leather belt. The Ford of Frew on the River Forth was swollen with icy water. Approaching it by a narrow track he had lulled his guards by his apparent fatigue. Rob's arms were freed for his safety but he was mounted behind James Stewart, the largest, most physically powerful man in the party. He was secured to Stewart by a leather thong. Suddenly in midstream Rob threw himself into the fast flowing river. He managed to cut his bindings with an armpit knife, discarded his plaid in the current, causing his pursuers to shoot at the clothing while he swam underwater further downstream to escape.

Some say that Stewart owed Rob for some benefit he had received in the past and helped him to escape.

The Duke of Montrose certainly thought this, because as Stewart came out of the water, Montrose struck him such a violent blow with the butt of his steel pistol, that it caused permanent brain damage.

Rob Roy was often helped by the fact that about one third of his guards were really on his side by Clan ties or affection, and one third of them were thoroughly afraid of having to deal with him if they actually confronted him. This only left one foolish third of his pursuers who could easily be diverted by shouts of "he is over here" or "he went that way".

Escape from the Duke of Athol

On another occasion Rob was held prisoner by the Duke of Athol's men, the Murrays. This time he had apparently grown weary of life on the hills and being unable to see his wife

and family who were always watched. Athol proposed to Rob that he should make a token surrender to him, after which he would receive a pardon. In his weariness Rob took the man at his word, and this idea was not without precedent. Athol however saw the capture of Rob as a great prize, which he hoped would win him position and favour with the government. He also hoped it would also bring 3,464 pounds sterling which the Government owed him for supplying and victualing soldiers. A vast sum. Rob was held at the castle of Logierait, Perthshire's strongest prison, with a powerful guard who were all warned to be alert for attempts to free the prisoner.

The Duke of Athol was elated. He came to view his prisoner and to crow like a dunghill rooster. It quickly was made obvious to Rob that a trial and a noose was planned for him, not a pardon. Then Athol went home and wrote to all the influential people he knew, boasting of his accomplishment. These letters were sent off immediately by horse and by a fast mail-boat to London.

The day after his imprisonment Rob began to cultivate the friendship of the guards. He was allowed to receive a considerable amount of whisky from friends outside, a normal custom for such a celebrated prisoner, awaiting sentencing. The guards were flattered by the attentions of such a famous man. He was such excellent company, passing their weary hours with good conversation, stories, song, and music on the chanter. They thoroughly enjoyed having Rob in their midst. Finally Rob heard that troops had left Perth and were on their way to collect him and take him to Edinburgh. They had a journey of only 22 miles to make. Rob circulated his whisky very freely. Presently a gillie (servant) of Rob's appeared, leading a horse, pleading with the guards that Rob be allowed to write to his wife and family to assure them of his well being.

The captain and the guards were sober enough to outward seeming, but a little less observant than they needed to be. For instance they did not notice that it was a light cavalry horse, not the chunky highland garron that the gillie should have had. Rob was allowed to go to the door with a jailer to have a few confidential words with the gillie. He paced up and down, as though in thought,

pausing to write the note to his kin, all the while moving a little further from his jailer. He stepped outside to pass the note, when the gillie threw him the reins and Rob leaped into the saddle and was gone in a flash down the road to Aberfeldy and home. He had 35 miles to cover, but no pursuit was made because the men of Logierait Castle found to their surprise they were totally devoid of horses.

Escape from Edinburgh Castle

In 1708 there was an abortive Jacobite uprising in the Highlands. King James Stuart (the family name used to be Stewart, but was changed by the French educated Mary, Queen of Scots, because there is no letter w in the French language) sailed from France with a French fleet of 30 ships, 6,000 soldiers and guns and ammunition enough to supply and support the uprising. The French leader of the party was not keen on the whole idea and when followed by an smaller English fleet, refused to enter the port of Leith and kept on sailing, despite James' desperate appeals to let him land, alone if necessary, in a small boat. This request was refused as James was viewed as too valuable a person to risk on such a dangerous mission. The entire fleet sailed all the way back to France, and there was great jubilation at their safe return with no loss of life. There was not even one shot fired in this whole voyage. Meanwhile the Clans had "risen" and now had to disband and face Government wrath. The well connected aristocracy were to be pardoned but in Rob Roy's case things were a bit different. During the uprising two French undercover agents had been landed in Scotland. Instead of landing in the Isle of Skye, they had come ashore in Argyle, Campbell country, supporters of the English Government. Rob Roy had been given the job of finding them and escorting them to safety. This he did and turned them over to his friend and neighbour MacIan, Chief of the Glencoe MacDonalds.

After the uprising was over Rob received a polite request from The Earl of Leven, commander of the government forces in Scotland, that if Rob found it convenient, he would be glad to see him in Edinburgh the following week. This left Rob undecided. It could be a trap to get him away from the safety of his home country. Leven was usually direct and honest. What to do? In

the end he decided to go rather than to seem afraid. Taking one gillie he made the journey to Edinburgh and with some anxiety, entered the vast Edinburgh castle where he was required to surrender his weapons, and heard the massive doors clang shut behind him. This was the place where his father had spent two years as a prisoner, and left a broken man.

The Earl wasted no time when he had Rob in his hands. He accused Rob of giving comfort and assistance to enemies of the sovereign. Could he deny it?. He was accused of aiding two French officers, unlawfully landed in the country for the purpose of subverting loyal subjects. Rob had thought that he had managed to complete his mission unnoticed. What was going on? How much did they know and how much were they guessing? As usual Rob took a bold approach. "What two French officers, my lord? Where and when? Can anyone name them?" Leven did not know the names, but had a nasty surprise for Rob. He expressed the opinion that, if given time, Rob himself would recollect the names of the officers. He would be confined for the night and in the morning would meet an acquaintance, MacDonald of Dalness, who would no doubt refresh Rob's memories of the event. Rob was staggered. That a MacDonald, who, no doubt had seen him with the Frenchmen, would betray his chief and his kind in this way.

In his prison cell Rob did some quick planning. He asked the jailer that his gillie be brought to attend him as was a gentleman's right. To the gillie Rob gave lengthy and detailed instruction in Gaelic, handed him some money and a letter, also in Gaelic. The letter was to a Highland officer of the Town Guard, known to Rob. He requested the officer to send a sergeant and twelve men to a certain address just before the town gates were to be shut for the night. Nothing unpleasant need be done, just go there, wait for a half hour, and leave again. This would be greatly appreciated by Rob Roy MacGregor, and some silver coins were provided to buy a drink for all concerned.

Rob's gillie had found the address MacDonald of Dalness. Rob calculated that someone capable of betraying his friends must be guilty of other things too. Not an honest man. The gillie waited at MacDonald's lodgings until he left for the tavern, then approached his landlady saying he was a friend of MacDonald's from the Highlands, and that he had heard that the Town Guard was coming for MacDonald and that he should get out of town quickly. Returning home to this message, MacDonald was suspicious. He hid behind the house to watch. Sure enough at nine o'clock

precisely, a picket of the
Town Guard appeared with lanterns, pikes, and muskets. MacDonald was no longer
in doubt. He bolted
through the narrow closes and streets of Edinburgh, and by morning was well on
his way to Dalness. The
Guard and the Sergeant meantime enjoyed their refreshment at Rob Roy's expense.

There was no demand for Rob to report to the Governor the next day. Rob waited
until evening then
boldly sent a message demanding that Lord Leven produce the evidence or release
him with an apology
for wrongful arrest. He was never given an audience with the Governor, but was
taken to the castle gates
where he was given back his sword and his weapons and released, a free man,
into the Edinburgh night.

The stories of Rob Roy's escapades caught the imagination of the population who
shared his feelings towards the law, and the powerful men who presumed to make
decisions on their behalf. He was a popular hero of the people of Scotland. He
had many narrow escapes from the Redcoats with numerous places known as Rob
Roy's Leap, testifying to his athletic ability. A classic painting in Scotland
is entitled *When did you last see your Father?* It portrays two of Rob's very
young sons being interrogated by a redcoat officer.

HIS LATER YEARS

Rob's outlaw life was to continue until at the age of 54, in the year 1725, he
was given a pardon by
General Wade, and he could at last return home to a normal life. His life in
the heather had taken
considerable toll of his health.

One day in later life, while attending the Kirk (church) service, the clergyman
was severely lecturing
about unchristian like behaviour. Afterwards Rob pointed out to him that he
seemed to be looking at him
during his lecture. The clergyman said that indeed he had been. He said that
Rob had bought a cow from
a poor woman at a low price. Rob replied that she had seemed well pleased with
the price at the time.
"It was her only cow" replied the Clergyman. Before the next church service Rob
had returned the cow
to the woman, refusing to accept any money back for it, and thereafter looked
out for her welfare.

At the end of his life Rob converted to Roman Catholicism and a priest was to
administer the last rites.

The priest insisted that Rob had to forgive his enemies. Rob mumbled a few
irrelevant names and events
from his past, but the priest knew of a violent dispute Rob had recently with

one John MacLaren, and insisted that he be forgiven. Reluctantly the dying man called his family to him and said "I forgive all my enemies, especially John MacLaren." Then fixing a beady eye on his son Robin, he added "But see you to him."

Rob Roy became one of only a few bold outlaws to die of old age. On his last day on earth, he received a visitor, John MacLaren. Rob would not face an adversary unarmed and helpless. Before admitting the man Rob had Mary assist him into his highland dress and prop him up in bed with his sword, dirk, and pistols to hand. MacLaren saw the fierce looking Rob Roy and hurriedly departed, mumbling something about "I heard that you were ill. I am sorry to have troubled you". When the visitor left, Rob said to his wife Mary, "It is all over. Put me to bed. Call the piper". The piper played a traditional pibroch, "I Return No More". He died peacefully in the year 1737, two months short of his 64th birthday, and lies buried in Balquidder.

In 1975 a statue was erected of Rob Roy just off the Road, near Stirling castle. The sculpture is no great likeness of the man but the words on the plaque, chosen by a MacGregor who is a direct descendent, are very appropriate:

My foot is on my native heath,
and my name is Rob Roy MacGregor

When he died Rob's total worth in animals, weapons, tools, clothing and furniture was evaluated at 284 pounds sterling. His funeral cost 400 pounds. Mary continued to live in their home, cared for by her two sons Coll and Robert, and the people of Clan Gregor. She was honoured and loved and when she died was buried at Rob's right hand side. On the left side are Coll and Robert. Coll was honoured and respected in life. Robin was hanged. He earned it.

A month after Rob Roy's death, John MacLaren was shot dead while ploughing a field. Robin had none of the finesse of his father. Robin was not charged in the death of John MacLaren, but was found guilty later of abducting and forcibly marrying a young woman from Edinburgh.

Many people have been inspired by the life of Rob Roy, not the least of these was an English poet who

wrote an epic ballad about it. The last verse is:

ROB ROY'S GRAVE

A famous man is Robin Hood,
The English ballad writer's joy
And Scotland has a thief as good,
An outlaw of as daring mood,
She has her brave Rob Roy.

-- William Wordsworth

On a cloudy, cool, May afternoon in 1997, I passed through MacGregor country, a most beautiful area known as the Trossachs, which was also my mother's country. Glengyle House where Rob Roy was born is at the North end of Loch Katrine, some three miles from Achray House where my mother was born.

(Katrine is a corruption of the Gaelic cateran which means Highland robber).

The area was full of emotion for me. I saw the steam ship Sir Walter Scott, built in 1899, when my mother was five years old and which still plies the Loch. I wondered what excitement the arrival of this ship brought to her young life.

Driving on some twenty miles of twisting roads I came to the tiny remote community of Balquhidder, the last resting place of Rob Roy. His grave is well cared for and has many visitors each year. People still wonder if he was a hero or a rascal. He was a man of his times. Much loved by many, detested by some.

Some people dismiss many stories about Rob Roy as exaggerations. Even today it would be a bold man who would make such a statement in MacGregor country.

His grave marker is simple but eloquent. For years the MacGregors were not allowed to use the clan name. Inscribed on his tombstone are the words: "MACGREGOR, DESPITE THEM."

John Hume standing Rob Roy's grave in the churchyard of Balquhidder [Wikipedia].
(photo by Allan Sharp)

Grave site of Rob Roy MacGregor, marking his wife (Helen) Mary, and sons Coll and Robert, in the Balquhidder churchyard.

Note the epitaph "MacGregor Despite Them."

(photo from Wikipedia [Rob Roy])

Plaque at what I [Allan Sharp] have identified as what I think to be the site of Rob Roy's birth place.

(photo by A. Sharp)

Head stone of the MacGregor family, located in another wee cemetery across the loch from the MacGregor cemetery, behind what I believe to be the site of Rob Roy's birth place.

(photo by A. Sharp)

click on any picture for larger image

MACGREGOR'S GATHERING

Glen Orchy's proud mountains, Coalchuirn and her towers,

Glenstrae and Glenlyon no longer are ours;

We're landless, landless, landless, Gragalach

Landless, landless, landless.

Through the depths of Loch Katrine the steed shall career,

O'er the peak of Ben Lomond the galley shall steer,

And the rocks of Craig-Royston like icicles melt,

E'er our wrongs be forgot or our vengeance unfelt!

MacGregor despite them shall flourish forever

-- Sir Walter Scott

Notes

1. Pennant's Tour, Vol II. Page 162. 5th edit
2. The Statistical Account of Scotland, Volume IX, 1701-1799 Edited by Sir John Sinclair,
Printed in Great Britain by the Scholar Press, Ilkley, Yorkshire
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. The Age of Faith by Will Durant, published by MJF Books
6. William Wallace: Braveheart by James Mackay, page 21
7. William Wallace: Braveheart, by James Mackay, pages 124-125
8. Allan Sharp, who took some of the photos in this document, describes his connection to Rob Roy as follows [personal correspondence with J.W., 2014]:

A female descendant of Rob Roy was born and seems to have lived on an island on Loch Lomond, thought to be Inchmoan Island (see Wikipedia). John Logan married the above lady around 1850. Logan was born on a train in Ohio when his parents were on their way to the gold rush.

They had a son John who married Mary Jane Hollywood (circa 1880), and they

lived at 467 Main Street, Bonhill. They had a son Jack (b. 1900) who married Margaret Brennan (b. 1899). Margaret was my grandmother's sister, and therein lies my connection to Rob Roy. They had a daughter named Patricia who married a Canadian named Jack Jordan.

Jack Jordan was privy to family details due to the fact that Margaret Brennan stayed with both him and Patricia. It was through Jack that I obtained all of the above information. When I asked for substantiation of the Rob Roy connection he informed me that the family tree and all else had been lost when the house was burned to the ground. (I do not know which house, or where. He did, however, inform me that a local councillor, who had shown great interest in the subject, was actually shown the document with the family tree of the woman from Inchmoan.)

I do not know if the councillor is still alive or if there any other records around. When I was researching the Sharp and Brennan family trees I didn't have time to research too deeply and Jack Jordan was getting on in years when I initially approached him. [-A.S., 2014]

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* Highly recommended for further reading

See also Jack Boyd's Memoirs.

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