

Candidate 2 evidence

Why despite their defeat at Falkirk were the Scots able to maintain their resistance to Edward I ?



Why despite their defeat at Falkirk were the Scots able to maintain their resistance to Edward I until 1304?

Prior to July 1298 the Scottish resistance led by William Wallace had enjoyed a fair amount of success. However this changed when the Wallace led army were defeated at the Battle of Falkirk by the forces of Edward I. Wallace had been an inspiring leader but in the wake of the defeat at Falkirk he either left or was forced from his position as Guardian of Scotland. The Scots had suffered a bloody defeat but this did not result in a collapse of resistance like that which had followed the battle at Dunbar in 1296.¹ There was perhaps a range of factors which allowed Scotland to resist Edward at home and abroad until their capitulation in 1304 at Strathord. The Scots were fortunate to have the support of the French and the papacy diplomatically, two of the most significant powers in Europe who aided the Scottish cause. They were also able to capitalise on the fact that Edward I was distracted by his war with France and his struggles to fund his military campaigns. Within Scotland the nobility attempted to provide the resistance with leadership by appointing new guardians to replace Wallace. Although on the field of battle the army had suffered terribly the Scottish military resistance continued and proved difficult to put down. These factors can be seen as the main reasons why the Scots were able to maintain their resistance to Edward I despite being heavily defeated at Falkirk.

Despite being one of the greatest powers in medieval Europe the French were not immune to the ambition of Edward I. Their 1295 alliance with Scotland had been the result of a shared hatred for the English king and a mutual desire to stop him claiming overlordship of their lands. After the events at Falkirk, French support became a vital crutch for the Scottish cause. Philip IV gave support and recognition to the Scots and although he never provided them with military reinforcements, the French were an important source of diplomatic aid. This helped restore faith in the Scottish resistance after Falkirk and gave the Scots the confidence to continue with their struggle. However Michael Haskell has argued that the Scottish efforts in France used up scarce resources and so were perhaps not entirely helpful to the resistance.² Despite this one of the greatest achievements of the French which helped Scottish resistance to Edward I was the Truce of Asnieres agreed in January 1302. It was due to the success of Bishop Lamberton that the Scots were included in the deal which agreed that for nine months as long as no Anglo-French peace deal was reached, there would be no attack on Scottish lands by the English.³ This allowed the Scottish resistance time to recuperate, improve their military and increase their support. It also showed that the French were willing to include the Scots in their own diplomatic efforts to resist Edward. However the truce also allowed the English time to

¹ Michael Brown, 'The Scottish Wars' (1297-1314), pg 187 (2004)

² Michael Haskell, Breaking the Stalemate, Thirteenth Century England VII pg 224 (1998)

³ Fiona Watson, Under the Hammer, pg 229 (2005)

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consolidate their plan for Scotland. The truce in fact done very little to strengthen Scottish resistance long term and it could be argued that its greatest achievement was delaying the Scottish surrender. However to the Scots at the time the truce must have been seen as proof of the strength of the support they had from France and given them hope. It could be said that the war between England and France was perhaps more important in terms of helping maintain Scottish resistance than the truce as it distracted Edward from Scotland.

The French became all the more significant to the Scots in the winter of 1301-02 which 'witnessed the zenith of French support for the Balliol cause' when King John Balliol was released from Papal custody to that of the French king.⁴ The stage was now set for Balliol to return to Scotland with a French army. This display of close relations between the French and the Scots must have caused Edward some concern as he faced the possibility of the Scottish resistance acquiring a new leader and Balliol returning to take back his throne. The hope that King John would return legitimised the continuing resistance in Scotland which claimed to be fighting in his name. Although it could be said that this was the height of good relations between France and Scotland the potential gains for the French king are too great to be ignored. In the eyes of Philip IV Balliol was a useful diplomatic pawn for his negotiations with Edward I and Boniface VIII⁵. The selfish intentions of Philip IV may be seen as one reason why the return of King John remained nothing but wishful thinking. However whatever hopes the Scots had for French support, were shattered in July 1302 with the shocking French defeat at Courtrai.⁶ They were forced to turn to Edward and make peace. Without having the French on side it seemed unlikely that Balliol would return and the resistance may have suffered a loss of faith in the man they claimed to be fighting for. The Scots were pushed closer to surrender as a result of being left without the French and this shows just how vital a lifeline French support was for the Scottish resistance.

The Papacy was yet another important power which helped give legitimacy to the cause of Scottish independence and the Scots a major advantage over Edward I. From 1299 Pope Boniface VIII made it clear that he disapproved of the actions of Edward I claiming there was no real justification for his attempt to subdue Scotland. The Pope wrote to the English king issuing the bull *Scimus Filli* which declared that 'from ancient times the kingdom of Scotland belonged to the Roman Church and is known to belong to it still.'⁷ Boniface also cited Alexander III's refusal to pay homage to the English king for his kingdom and Edward's earlier reassurances that he would do no harm to Scotland as

⁴ Fiona Watson, *Under the Hammer*, pg 145

⁵ Norman MacDougall, *An Antidote to the English; The Auld Alliance 1295-1560*, pg 24 (2001)

⁶ Jeffery Hamilton. *The Plantagenets: History of a Dynasty*, pg 79 (2010)

⁷ Bull off Boniface VIII to Edward I, 27th June 1299 , *Sources for the Study of the Scottish Wars of Independence*, pg 62 (1998)

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proof that Edward had no right to claim he was the Scotland's feudal lord. The Pope's disapproval of Edward's actions and demand for them to stop undermined the English monarch's attempts to justify how he had treated Scotland. It helped the Scots continue their resistance by showing that they had every right to defend their independence. However papal intervention into the issue meant that the Scots were forced to give the papacy a degree of control over affairs and this jeopardised their chances of being a truly independent kingdom once again.

Both the Scots and the English were invited to make their appeals at the papal curia in response to the bull. Edward I had his barons write a response which objected to the pope becoming involved in domestic issues but this was likely never sent. Edward's own letter of 7th May 1301 reached the pope on 2nd July. Meanwhile three ambassadors from Scotland were sent by John de Soules and 'the community' to make Scotland's case.⁸ Edward claimed that the English kings had an ancient right to be involved in Scottish affairs and act as overlord. It was by this right that he had become involved in Scotland after the Maid of Norway's death and installed his own administration following King John's crime of treason. The English argument was detailed and lengthy but it had one major weakness. It was heavily based on ancient and somewhat mythical claims. For example the service done by King Angusel of Scots to King Arthur at a feast at Caerleon is among the historical 'proofs' of English lordship that are cited.⁹ The weakness of Edward's claim to Scotland only helped make the Scottish case stronger and showed that he could not properly justify his invasion. The stronger the Scottish case appeared, the more likely it was that the papacy would continue to support them and the longer their resistance could go on.

The Scottish appeal at the curia was led by Baldred Bisset, a clerk of St Andrews. Unlike the English he focused on the more recent past although he did state that Scotland's earlier conversion to Christianity was a sign of its independence. Bisset stated that there was no real evidence of the English having a claim to overlordship of Scotland. When Alexander III died Guardians had taken his place not Edward I and they had refused to acknowledge Edward's claim of overlordship during the Great Cause. Bisset also argued that it was only through 'force and fear' that King John had submitted to his English counterpart. This appeal helped maintain papal support from the Scottish cause which helped strengthen the status of the Scottish resistance.

By having the support of the Pope the Scots proved that they had a right to fight against English occupation and could claim they were doing what was right in God's eyes. In the deeply religious

⁸ R. James Goldstein, *The Scottish Mission to Boniface VIII in 1301: A Reconsideration of the Context of the Instructions and Processes*, *Scottish Historical Review*, Volume IXX pg 3 (1991)

⁹ Michael Prestwich, *Edward I*, pg 492 (1988)

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context of the time this gave the Scots a great advantage. The papacy can be seen as one of two external forces which aided the Scottish resistance by restraining the force of Edward I, the second force being the French. However this support was short lived, the Scots were plunged into the depths of isolation as first Philip and then Boniface sought reconciliation with Edward by the end of 1302.¹⁰ When this vital support began to crumble so too did the Scottish ability to resist Edward I, this can be seen as testimony to how important they were. However it could be said that the power of the French and the Papacy only delayed the inevitable surrender of the Scots as nothing could stop the ambitions of Edward.

The Scots were fortunate that the force of Edward was somewhat restrained by the fact he was experiencing troubles at home. Edward's military plans found few supporters outside the royal household and added to grievances over military services were complaints about taxation.¹¹ Since 1294 Edward had been calling upon his nobles to preform military service for him as he launched attacks on Wales, Scotland and Gascony. The sheer size and ambition of Edward's military campaigns meant that he had to dramatically increase the amount of goods he took for use by the military and royal households. This had caused anger amongst the English nobles and had done little to help Edward's volatile relationship with those around him. In 1300 the relationship was strained further by Edward's continuing demands for military service. He looked to extend the obligation of military service to men owning land worth £40 but this caused outrage at parliament. This resulted in Edward being unable to demand service from these men and only being able to ask them to join his campaign in Scotland that summer. However this resistance to the king's demands went further than those who Edward wanted to extend military service to, his war in Scotland was so unpopular that even traditional obligations began to be tested¹² In Durham and Yorkshire local people openly supported those who resisted military service showing that Edward's ambitions were not widely shared with his subjects. As a result he seriously struggled to raise the forces he needed to. This inadvertently aided the Scottish resistance as it meant that they were facing a weakened English force. It also meant that Edward was somewhat distracted by his need to acquire troops and so he was not focusing on formulating a proper military plan. Therefore despite being victorious at Falkirk Edward's struggles to keep his subjects on side meant that his army was unable to maintain its momentum. As a result the Scottish resistance found they were able to take advantage of Edward's weakened position. Edward had to be mindful not to push too hard for taxes or military service as it may have led to his own nobles turning on him particularly as there were already hostilities between the two regarding the division of Welsh lands and the boundary review of the Royal Forest. This combined with his war in France meant Edward was

¹⁰ Michael Prestwich, *Edward I*, pg 497

¹¹ *Edward I*, Oxford DNB

¹² Marc Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, pg 323 (2009)

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both weaker military and distracted from Scotland. This gave the Scots an upper hand as despite some internal disputes amongst their leadership they were able to focus solely on their efforts to resist the English. If it were not for Edward's weakened state he may have been a much harder force to maintain resistance to and the Scots could have been forced into a surrender much sooner than 1304.

Perhaps the most significant way in which the Scottish nobility continued resistance to Edward I was through the continuation of the guardianship. The revival of the guardianship under Wallace had given leadership to the resistance and the very existence of guardians was a significant symbol of Scottish self-governance. After Falkirk Wallace resigned and was replaced by the old foes John Comyn, the younger of Badenoch and Robert Bruce Earl of Carrick. It could be said that this was a foolish decision by the Community of the Realm which hindered rather than helped Scottish resistance as the two rivals failed to provide cohesive leadership for Scotland. However in choosing Bruce and Comyn to govern the kingdom the community acted out of a feeling of political expediency in an attempt to maintain unity in the kingdom so that the common foe might be effectively resisted.¹³ It has been proposed that the pair may have come to a deal regarding the crown of Scotland which allowed them to work together.¹⁴ Despite attempts to make the shared guardianship work it was somewhat inevitable that the two would come to blows. At a parliament in 1299 it was said that Comyn grabbed Bruce by the throat and William Lamberton was made principle guardian in an attempt to keep the peace between the two nobles.¹⁵ It could be suggested that the internal conflict amongst the guardians done little for the Scottish resistance. However the guardians were clearly active in diplomatic missions, as a letter from Philip IV to Bruce VII and Comyn suggests that they were involved in mustering support for the Scottish cause.

Unsurprisingly Bruce resigned the guardianship in 1300, perhaps due to fears that Balliol was going to return to Scotland. He was replaced by Ingram de Umfraville, a supporter of the Balliol/Comyn faction who helped shift the guardianship in favour of the displaced king. Their support for Balliol was made clear in peace talks with Edward I in the autumn of 1300 when the trio demanded the restoration of King John, the recognition of Edward Balliol's right of succession and the reinstating of Scottish nobles and churches in lands which the English had taken.¹⁶ Whilst they were unsuccessful in obtaining their ambitious demands they did secure a truce that was to last until May 1301. This can be seen as evidence that the guardians were determined to act in the interests of Scotland. Their existence meant that there was someone able to speak on Scotland's behalf round the negotiating table and argue with Edward I diplomatically. The truce they secured may have been far from the independence

¹³ Norman Reid, *The Kingless Kingdom: The Scottish Guardians of 1286-1306*, pg 110

¹⁴ *The Scottish Historical Review* Vol.XXIV No. 96 July 1927, pg 248

¹⁵ IBID

¹⁶ Michael Penman, *Robert the Bruce*, pg 138 (2014)

Word Count:504

they desired but similar to the truce which the French secured it allowed the Scots time to focus on their next move. However it gave the English just as much time to plot their next attack on the Scottish resistance.

There was yet another change of leadership in 1301 when John de Soulis became sole guardian of Scotland. He had strong connections to France and it is thought he spent much of his time before his appointment on the continent. However Fordun suggests that Soulis was playing a role in leading Scotland prior to this as King John referred to him as being associated in office with Comyn, during his time as guardian.¹⁷ John's appointment in May 1301 came just months before Balliol's release to French custody and it is widely accepted that Soulis was made guardian by the ousted king. Therefore it may be possible to argue that John Balliol did help the Scottish resistance to Edward I by continuing to provide a leader for the Scots in his absence. Soulis proved to be a good diplomat and this was invaluable given the importance of foreign support. He successfully helped orchestrate the Scottish appeal to Boniface VIII and with Umfraville he attempted to launch a military attack on the English stronghold of Lochmaben which had been held by the Bruce's. However 'the war of deeds was less effective than the war of words.'¹⁸ Their military campaign was short lived but it is undeniable that the success of Soulis diplomatic activities helped the Scottish cause secure much needed support. Without the skills of Soulis this support may have been much harder to find. It could also be said that as a sole guardian with the backing of King John Soulis was able to provide the Scottish resistance with better leadership as the guardians before him as he was not distracted by infighting and personal rivalries. Despite this success, come 1304 John Comyn was guardian once again. The continuous change of the guardians may be seen as a weakness which prevented them from truly leading the Scottish resistance. However whatever changes that were made, they were often made with the intention of creating stable leadership and therefore it may be said that it was not only individuals, but the wider community of the realm which helped the Scots continue their resistance.

Although the Scots had suffered a catastrophic defeat at the battle of Falkirk there continued to be a Scottish military effort against the English until the peace settlement of 1304. Compared to the forces mustered by Edward I the Scots were hugely outnumbered and had little hope of ever repeating the success of Stirling Bridge particularly without the leadership of Wallace and the dead de Moray. However they were able to continue a level of resistance to the English particularly as Edward was not in the strongest of positions financially as suggested by Watson.¹⁹

¹⁷ John de Soulis, Oxford DNB

¹⁸ John de Soulis, Oxford DNB

¹⁹ Fiona Watson, Under the Hammer

Edward's campaign in Galloway cost him between forty thousand pounds and his campaign of 1303 eighty thousand pounds which he simply did not have. (See C. Tabraham, 'Scottorum Malleus: Edward I and Scotland.' in D.H Williams and J.R Kenyon)

Despite victory at Falkirk the Edwardian administration was still little more than an occupying force in the south of Scotland, which was particularly weak without reinforcements.²⁰ In 1300 the Scots attempted to hold out against Edward's force at the siege of Caerlaverock Castle despite being greatly outnumbered. The Scots boldly defended the fortress until 'they begged (the English) that they would do no more to them, for they would give up the castle to the king and throw themselves upon his mercy.'²¹ None the less the siege demonstrated the determination to continue the resistance and not surrender easily. There was greater success for the Scots in 1303, when despite the increasingly dire diplomatic situation the military resistance enjoyed victory at Roslin. Led by John Comyn and Simon Fraser the Scots successfully attacked two camps where English forces had settled before defeating a third division of Edward's army. This provided a much needed boost to the spirits of the Scottish resistance and supplied them with some hope that perhaps they could continue to keep the forces of Edward I at bay. This hope was added to by the success of Scottish raids in the south west which put the English garrisons in real danger. Yet another notable act of military resistance was the Scottish defence of Stirling castle which the English laid siege to in the spring of 1304. Despite Edward relentlessly attacking the important stronghold the garrison's leader the knight, William Oliphant encouraged his men to hold out for four months, 'for the sake of the Lion' suggesting that despite having no king the Scots were willing to protect the interests of a would be monarch whoever they were. Their surrender on 24th July marked the end of Scotland's military resistance. Edward forced the garrison to endure a period of uncertainty while he rained down missiles onto the damaged castle to show off his new siege weapons including the Warwolf, a huge trebuchet. Again Watson suggests that this did Edward I little credit in Scotland. Although overall the Scottish military efforts after 1298 had little impact in terms of stopping the English especially when he began wintering in Scotland, the victories they did enjoy boosted morale and showed that the Scots were still a serious threat.²² Whilst it may not have been the most significant factor in enabling the Scots to continue their resistance to Edward I, the attempts to prolong the military effort showed that despite the defeat at Falkirk the Scots were in no hurry to surrender. This perhaps suggests why the peace settlement, the Ordinance of Scotland was to a degree lenient on the Scots.

Overall it is fair to say that the Scots faced a serious struggle against Edward I after their defeat at Falkirk. From then on, rather than looking to defeat the English the main aim of the Scots was to prolong their resistance for as long as possible. There was little hope of a major set piece Scottish

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²⁰ Fiona Watson, *Settling the Stalemate*, pg 132

²¹ *The Siege of Caerlaverock (Contemporary Poem.) Sources for the Study of the Scottish Wars of Independence*, pg 67

²² *The Chronicle of Lanercost* states of Edward I that 'whatever he gained in summer he lost in winter.' This is why his decision to stay in Scotland over winter was such a turning point in the English fortunes.

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military victory due to the weakened state of the army but that does not mean that the military efforts of the Scots should be regarded as unimportant. Their efforts at Caerlaverlock, Roslin and Stirling show a true determination to resist the forces of Edward I and suggest that there were brief moments of hope for the Scottish forces. Ultimately though they could never be the force that they once had been and their contribution to the Scottish resistance could never be anything but minimal. However the English were also weakened in the years after Falkirk, Edward I plans were seriously hampered by his lack of funds and a lack of support from his nobles. With the English king facing such serious difficulties and his attention being divided between his forces in Scotland and France, the Scots were fortunate to not have to face the full force of Edward I. Although, once again this can be seen as only delaying the inevitable, it created opportunities for the Scots to continue their resistance. Perhaps more significant to the success of the Scottish resistance was the leadership provided by the guardians. It is difficult to argue that they brought a great deal of stability given the near constant infighting and the fact that the Comyn and Bruce guardianship can be seen as a forerunner to the civil war which would later arise between the two families and factions. None the less they were still leaders for Scotland and an important symbol of Scottish independence despite the lack of a monarch. This is particularly true for John de Soulis who gave the resistance hope that Balliol would return and played an important role in the diplomatic missions which brought Scotland much needed support. The combination of leadership from the Guardians in Scotland and the efforts of the French and the papacy can be seen as the most significant reasons why the Scots were able to continue their resistance. Although the support from the continent was only temporary and likely motivated by the self-interests of foreign powers it gave the Scots an advantage over the English. The issuing of *Scimus Filli* and the Treaty of Asnieres can be seen as having a minimal impact long term and given that John Balliol never returned, their efforts to have him freed from English custody can be seen as insignificant. However as two of the most important powers in medieval Europe they were significant allies who strengthened the Scottish cause. Without their backing the Scots may have surrendered much sooner.

Regardless of the various factors which enabled the Scots to continue their resistance, in 1304 they surrendered at Strathford. The promise of no loss of life, limb or land for any nobles involved in the resistance may be seen as being fair and lenient but this did not stop the English restablising their control over Scotland. It may be said that after the defeat at Falkirk the Scots faced a bleak situation. It was only due to the support of foreign powers and the leadership of the guardians along with a degree of good fortune that the Scots were able to prolong the inevitable surrender until 1304.

Word Count:4000

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