

The Historicity of Barbour's *Bruce*

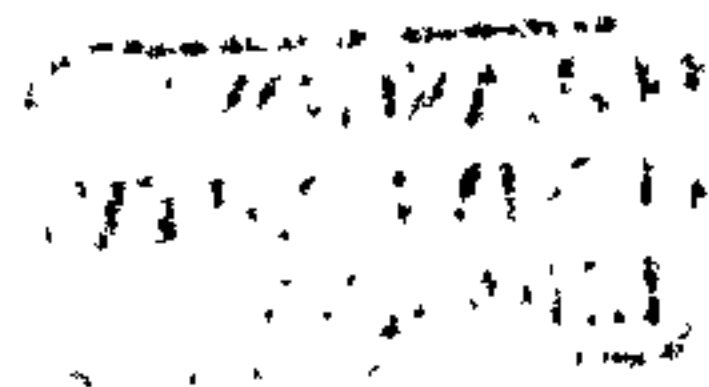
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ABSTRACT

The Historicity of Barbour's *Bruce*

This dissertation systematically evaluates the historicity of the epic poem *The Bruce*, written towards the end of the fourteenth century and attributed to Archdeacon John Barbour of Aberdeen. For the purposes of analysis, the poem has been divided into 119 discrete episodes, which cover 95 percent of the text. Ninety-one of these appear in other historical sources. A rigorous evaluative methodology establishes a satisfactory level of historicity of these 91 episodes, significantly higher than has been allowed by many critics of the poem. The 28 episodes that do not appear in other sources are assessed by a parallel methodology. The analyses of these two types of episode provide an original rationale for judiciously using *The Bruce* as a sole source.

Using the battle of Bannockburn as a case study, the value of *The Bruce* as a source is clearly demonstrated. By implication, it may also be regarded as an indispensable source for the 1306-1329 period as a whole. However, a textual analysis of the poem indicates that at least four, and perhaps as many as six, hands were at work in the writing of *The Bruce*. It is suggested that John Barbour may have been the lead author and editor.

The dissertation concludes that *The Bruce* was written as a historically accurate (insofar as the term was understood in the fourteenth century) account of the part Robert I and his lieutenants played in the War of Independence. It is nationalistic in tone. Its core ideologies are chivalry and freedom of the Scots from English domination. It uses literary devices to make the content accessible, persuasive and memorable. Thus, it may also be regarded as a fundamentally important contribution to Scottish literature.

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Introductory Note

John Barbour had produced the epic poem *The Bruce* by 1375, around sixty years after the main events it describes. Ostensibly, it is a record of the exertions of Robert I to establish Scotland's independence of the English crown. In this struggle, as Barbour amply illustrates, the king's main adherents were his brother Sir Edward Bruce, Thomas Randolph earl of Moray, and James lord of Douglas. At a deeper level, *The Bruce* is part history, part ideology, part chivalry and part propaganda. Compared to these aspects, any literary aim that Barbour might have held is less important, though the literary accomplishment of the poem is substantial. The relative weights of the epic's different aspects have been the occasion of much comment in the last two hundred years. Each has had its own champions, though few attempts have been made to evaluate them comparatively.

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to carry out a systematic evaluation of the historicity of Barbour's *Bruce*. It will pursue this research result in five ways. First, episodes in the poem will be checked against other broadly reliable sources, where these exist. Second, and following from the first, it will interpret Barbour-specific material in terms of potential historical reliability. Third, it will explore the likelihood, or otherwise, that John Barbour was the sole author of *The Bruce*. Fourth, as a case example, it will investigate what is known of the battle of Bannockburn with and without Barbour. Fifth, it will evaluate the underlying premise of the dissertation, that Barbour's basic purpose was not simply to praise chivalry or to lionise Robert I and James Douglas. Instead, among other things, he aimed to set down in detail for his contemporaries and for future generations how military activity is to be used to protect national freedom (political independence).

Words like "free", "freedom" and "independence" should be understood here in

the context that Barbour might have understood. Freedom of a nation's people was, at best, a hazy concept. As Grant¹ makes clear, Scottish regnal solidarity was well established by 1286 and, in the long run, a succession of English kings was unable to persuade or force the Scottish nobility into loyal submission. It is, perhaps, more likely that Barbour was thinking of the kingdom's freedom under a king wielding the widest possible sovereignty, with minimal obstruction from outside interests, whether secular or religious. Morton's² discussion is a useful summary, and warns against the danger of interpreting fourteenth century notions in current terms.

Since Barbour was first used as a source nearly five hundred years ago, historians have been divided on the subject of his historical reliability. Some have used material from *The Bruce* quite uncritically, others have used it extensively but only after some evaluation of its dependability; some have ignored it without comment, and others have condemned it as a misleading observer of the events of 1306-29. At various times, some historians have shown a (reasonable) preference for the reliability of documentary sources, others have demonstrated a distinct (and somewhat irrational) predilection towards English as opposed to Scottish chronicle records. A secondary purpose of this dissertation is to assess these diverse attitudes, though it is feared that no definite conclusion may be possible.

¹ Grant, Alexander, "Scottish foundations: Late medieval contributions", in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British History*, London, 1995, pp. 97-108.

² Morton, Graeme, *William Wallace: Man and Myth*, Stroud, 2001, p. 28.

Chapter 1

The Bruce as an historical source

“To some extent our view of Bruce will always depend on
how much credence we give to Barbour¹.”

Historians have used John Barbour’s epic poem *The Bruce* for five hundred years as an important source for the War of Independence fought by king Robert I and his close associates Thomas Randolph, James Douglas and Edward Bruce. As will be seen in this chapter, some have used Barbour extensively and without question, others only with careful evaluation, while some have adopted the minimalist approach to *The Bruce* as a store of historical knowledge. In the last two hundred years or so there has been increasing emphasis on the reliability of the historical information in Barbour’s work, in line with the developing professional approach to all historical sources. The purpose of this dissertation is to carry out a systematic analysis of the historical reliability of *The Bruce*, and this will involve consideration of dependability, consistency, propaganda, omissions and errors.

Watson observes that there is a propaganda comment embedded in the Scottish accounts of the Wars of Independence, but sometimes disregards the tendency for English state papers and chronicles to show deep bias and constant predisposition towards prejudice². Nevertheless, she makes the valid point that the purpose of historical analysis is to appreciate how different versions of past events have emerged and, in doing so, to attempt both to separate fable from reality and understand the sometimes close relationship between them.

¹ Barrow, Geoffrey W.S., *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd. edition, Edinburgh, 1988, p. 312.

² Watson, Fiona, *Under the Hammer: Edward I and Scotland 1286-1307*, East Linton, 1998, pp.11-15; the description of the process of Norham demonstrates awareness of English bias. See also: Duncan, A.A.M., “The Process of Norham, 1291”, in P.R. Coss and S.D. Lloyd, eds., *Thirteenth Century England V*, Woodbridge, 1995.

Oddly enough, Sir Herbert Maxwell³, probably one of the most criticised historians of the last one hundred years, clearly identifies the point Watson occasionally overlooks: “it is hopeless to expect impartiality for the historians of either nation at this time”. Overall, he credits Barbour with being “quite invaluable to our knowledge of the War of Independence⁴” and absolves him of the “miraculous and fanciful incidents” that appear in the accounts of later writers⁵. Maxwell quotes some evidence for his positive view of the historical authenticity of *The Bruce*, though it must be recognised that *The Early Chronicles Relating to Scotland* is not a comprehensive analysis, but the text of lectures delivered in 1912 to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. However, as will be seen from the evaluation that follows, Maxwell was representing a view that had been acceptable for nearly four hundred years, but that was to attenuate gradually during the course of the twentieth century.

Early Printed Histories of Scotland

Perhaps the earliest attempt at setting down a history of Scotland came from John Mair⁶, “a truly innovative scholar⁷”, in his *History of Greater Britain*. This comparative work about Scotland and England was set out “with a surprising lack of bias, and with balanced comment⁸”, showing “a wonderfully sound historical instinct, distinguishing truth from the fables with which Scottish annals were then encrusted⁹”. Mair does not, of course, quote his sources in any formal way, though it is clear he relies on *Scotichronicon*¹⁰ for the basis of his coverage of the 1306-1332 period. However, it seems that interpretations from Barbour emerge for time to time. His brief passage¹¹ on the Bruce/Comyn deal of 1304 favours Barbour's version

³ Maxwell, Sir Herbert E., *The Early Chronicles Relating to Scotland*, Glasgow, 1912, p. 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁶ Mair, John, *History of Greater Britain*, Edinburgh, 1892.

⁷ Lynch, Michael (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, Oxford, 2001, p. 304.

⁸ Nicholson, Ranald, *Scotland: The Late Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 586.

⁹ A.J.G Mackay, quoted in Nicholson, *Scotland: The Late Middle Ages*, p. 586.

¹⁰ Bower, Walter, *Scotichronicon*, 9 volumes, ed. D.E.R. Watt, Aberdeen, 1987-1998.

¹¹ Mair, John, *History of Greater Britain*, Edinburgh, 1892, p. 207.

more than Bower's, and the same may be said of his notes on the battle of Myton Upswale¹², as he calls it (the "Chapter" of Myton, according to Barbour). The report of King Robert's "displeasure" about Edward Bruce's deal with Philip Mowbray¹³ (relating to the surrender of Stirling Castle) could only come from Barbour. Mair's observations on numbers at Bannockburn¹⁴ seem to draw on Bower for the English total (300,000, though Mair doubts this) but are much closer to Barbour's figure (35,000 against 30,000). The estimates of numbers involved in Clifford's flanking action¹⁵ seem to be Mair's own, but the description of Douglas's reaction to Randolph's apparent crisis is very similar to Barbour's; it should be recalled that Barbour is the only source that notes Douglas's move in support of Randolph's schiltrom. Finally, the description of King Robert's last will and testament¹⁶ seems to be derived from Barbour, though some of the detail may be drawn from Bower¹⁷. The conclusion must be that Mair drew heavily on *Scotichronicon*, but added some fillers from Barbour. These are so insignificant to the main thrust of his account that it could not be claimed that he used Barbour as a formal source. Rather, the impression is given that a few details from *The Bruce*, perhaps retained in Mair's memory, are added here and there without his conscious awareness of the source of such information.

Hector Boece's *History and Chronicles of Scotland*¹⁸ published a few years later in 1527, is a less formal work than Mair. It has been much criticised for inclusion of elements of fancy and fabrication¹⁹, "...colourful narration rather than analysis and interpretation...²⁰". His work has also been described as "long on rhetorical

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁷ *Scotichronicon*, pp. 39-43.

¹⁸ Boece, Hector, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, 2 volumes, translated by John Bellenden, Edinburgh, 1821, Volume 2.

¹⁹ Wormald, Jenny, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625*, London, 1981, pp. 66-67.

²⁰ Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 586.

flourishes and very short on either hard evidence or accuracy²¹ However, he may have been the first to attempt an integration of the classical tradition with the Scottish, as he draws heavily on Tacitus' account of the Romans in Scotland²². Royan has argued strongly that Boece may have made a more important contribution to Scottish historiography than is usually put to his credit, and that at least some of his supposedly "lost" sources may, in fact, have existed²³. Like Mair, Boece is heavily dependent on *Scotichronicon*²⁴, but seems more familiar with *The Bruce* than his contemporary. Thus, like Barbour, he makes John Comyn the instigator of the agreement with Robert Bruce²⁵, and specifically links the military reaction of Edward I (Longshanks) to King Robert's coronation²⁶, a matter that is little more than implied in *Scotichronicon*. Boece relates how James Douglas left Bishop Lamberton's household with the latter's tacit support and his horse, to join King Robert, and how he then served him faithfully till the end of his life²⁷. This is clearly derived from Barbour, and is indicated by the introduction of a two-line quotation from *The Bruce* at this point. Barbour's influence may be seen also in the description of Edward Bruce's deal with Philip Mowbray about the surrender of Stirling Castle²⁸, and King Robert's subsequent reaction to his brother's move. Boece uses precisely the estimate of 30,000 given by Barbour for the Scots army at Bannockburn. His description of Clifford's flanking action²⁹, though he does not mention the latter by name, is otherwise drawn from *The Bruce*; he puts 800 horsemen on the English side, gives 500 to Randolph, indicates that the English move was identified by King

²¹ Lynch, *Oxford Companion*, p. 304.

²² Royan Nicola R., *The "Scotorum Historiae" of Hector Boece*, unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1996, pp. 179-81.

²³ Royan, Nicola R., "Hector Boece and the question of Veremund", *The Innes Review*, 50 (Spring 2001), pp. 42-62.

²⁴ Royan, Nicola R., "Scotichronicon rewritten? Hector Boece's debt to Bower in the *Scotorum Historia*", in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 57-71.

²⁵ Boece, Hector, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, 2 volumes, translated by John Bellenden, Edinburgh, 1821, p. 378.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

Robert, and describes Douglas's reaction to the skirmish. While perhaps misunderstanding the nature of Barbour's "small folk", Boece does describe their contribution to the battle³⁰. He identifies Douglas as leading the pursuit of Edward II (Caernarfon) to Dunbar, the part played by Earl Patrick, and the escape by sea³¹. The Scots magnates killed are identified, as only Barbour does, as Sir William Vipont and Sir Walter Ross³². One detail of Bishop Sinclair's action against English invaders in Fife is specific to Barbour³³, the presence of the earl of Fife. Boece relates the part played by "Spalden" (Barbour: Sym of Spaldyn) in the capture of Berwick³⁴, and agrees that Sir William Soules was arrested at Berwick for his part in the conspiracy against the king³⁵. Unlike Mair, then, it would appear that Hector Boece drew a substantial number of details from *The Bruce*; indeed the nature of the material used suggests that Boece consulted a copy of the poem as he wrote, rather than depending on memory. No associated hard evidence exists, of course, but this interpretation is indicated by the way that specific details or incidents from Barbour are preferred over their equivalents in Boece's main source, the *Scotichronicon*.

The third major sixteenth century historian, George Buchanan³⁶, published his overtly political³⁷ history of Scotland in 1582. He is credited with establishing the place of Gaelic Scotland as an integral part of the whole, though this notion was not followed up by the succeeding generation of Scots historians. His use of Barbour is similar to that of Boece, in that he appears to base the 1306-1332 period solidly on *Scotichronicon*, but with certain incidents and details (somewhat more than Boece) drawn from *The Bruce*. His version of the Comyn/Bruce deal³⁸ seems to be an amalgam of both sources, as is his account of the king's last will and testament³⁹. He

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 392-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 393.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 393.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³⁶ Buchanan, George, *History of Scotland*, 3 volumes, ed. William Bond, Edinburgh, 1722, Volume 1.

³⁷ Lynch, *Oxford Companion*, p. 304.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

uses Barbour's estimate of the Scots army at Bannockburn⁴⁰ (30,000), and of the English horse (800) and the Scottish foot (500) in Clifford's action⁴¹. Buchanan draws heavily on Barbour for two episodes that feature James Douglas; his early life, service with Bishop William "Lambert", failure to recover his lands from Longshanks, and his joining up with Bruce⁴² (though at "Merne" rather than at "Arykstone"); and his move to intervene in support of Randolph against Clifford on the first day of Bannockburn⁴³. He notes that the king sent a troop of horsemen against the English archers during the battle⁴⁴, a detail that is found only in Barbour. He retells the poet's story of the small folk⁴⁵, and follows precisely Caernarfon's escape by water from Dunbar to Berwick⁴⁶. Lastly, he identifies the Scots losses at Bannockburn as "but two knights⁴⁷", and places Sir William Soules at Berwick⁴⁸ (where he was Governor) when arrested in 1320. As with Hector Boece, this analysis gives the strong impression that Buchanan used Barbour as a dependable source for certain incidents, particularly concerning James Douglas and the battle of Bannockburn.

Thus, the most highly regarded historian of this period (Mair) depends heavily on *Scotichronicon*, while two more criticised writers (Boece and Buchanan) used Barbour as a source relatively more frequently.

Enlightenment Histories

Buchanan's history was the accepted text for radicals and republicans for more than 150 years (Boece was the choice of royalists). During that time, Scottish historiography concentrated on two topics, neither of which is of any interest to the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 347-348.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

theme being pursued here. The first was an upsurge in ecclesiastical history, brought about by the need to defend the Reformation and enhance its philosophical base. The second was a long-running debate about the mythical elements of Boece's work. Ferguson⁴⁹ discusses this period and its developments in some depth.

Two writers, in particular, made highly significant contributions to the general development of Scottish historiography during the Enlightenment. Robertson's *History of Scotland* was published in 1759⁵⁰. It concentrated on the reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI, but contained a review of the early and medieval periods. Robertson notes that Scottish history becomes more "authentic" only after the death of King Alexander III, due to the existence of records preserved in England⁵¹. He observes that the involvement of Longshanks in the "Great Cause" put Scotland's independence in great danger, and that Balliol was chosen as king because he was more obsequious and less formidable than Bruce the Competitor⁵². This is broadly in line with the treatment of Barbour (and others), though Robertson makes no reference to *The Bruce*. According to this version, King Robert eventually emerged to "assert his own rights", and independence was established after much (unspecified) bloody conflict with the English⁵³. Thereafter, Robertson gives a general review of military and organisational aspects of Scottish kingship, but without any personal details until the accession of James I⁵⁴. He shows no particular awareness of Barbour, and his history could have been written without any knowledge of *The Bruce*.

David Hume's *History of England* appeared in four volumes, starting in 1754, though the volume dealing with early and medieval was not published until 1762⁵⁵. He is much more an admirer of Longshanks than Robertson, at least where the law is

⁴⁹ Ferguson, William, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation*, Edinburgh, 1998, pp. 144-226.

⁵⁰ Robertson, William, *The History of Scotland*, London, 1759.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 210-12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-235.

⁵⁵ Hume, David, *The History of England*, 4 volumes, London, 1754-62.

concerned, though he regards English policy towards the Scots as “barbarous”⁵⁶. When describing Robert Bruce’s move for the kingship, Hume makes a rather interesting statement:

“....we shall rather follow the account given by Scottish historians; not that their authority is in general any wise comparable to that of the English, but because they may be supposed sometimes better informed concerning facts which so nearly interested their own nation.”⁵⁷

Perhaps subsequent medieval historians, Scottish as well as English, have exaggerated too much Hume’s unsupported view of the comparability of authority. For the 1306-1314 period, Hume follows elements of Barbour’s account quite closely, except that Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, is not mentioned⁵⁸. In particular, both Barbour and Hume note the fall of Forfar castle in 1308. The latter’s account of the battle of Bannockburn⁵⁹ closely resembles Barbour’s, except that Sir James Douglas is identified as the commander of cavalry. Hume ignores the repeated invasions of northern England during the remainder of Caernarfon’s reign. His account of the Weardale campaign⁶⁰ follows Froissart rather than Barbour, and his report of the Treaty of Edinburgh is drawn from English sources⁶¹.

It is clear that Hume showed more awareness of Barbour than Robertson though, even in the case of the former, development of the 1306-1329 narrative does not draw to any great extent on material specific to *The Bruce*. It may be fairly observed that, in the 100 years surrounding the Scottish Enlightenment, Barbour (as a source for the reign of Robert I) was not much used or highly favoured.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-262.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 262-264.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 288-291.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

Later Historiography

The next advance in Scottish historiography was the publication by Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes,⁶² in 1776 of *Annals of Scotland*. Not only does Hailes use a much wider range of sources than any of the three sixteenth century authors evaluated above, he also uses his sources much more carefully and conscientiously and gives full annotation and identification. Throughout, he gives the strong impression of familiarity with *The Bruce* and other sources. Where there are conflicting accounts, he tends to select one source over others; for example, when relating the Bruce/Comyn deal, he uses the *Scotichronicon* version (Fordun) rather than Barbour⁶³. However, he also submits the various accounts of John Comyn's death to minute scrutiny⁶⁴ and concludes: "If readers can digest so many absurdities it is an ungrateful labour to set plain truth before them". Hailes takes an early opportunity to imply a degree of confidence on Barbour as a source: "As there will be frequent occasion for quoting the metrical life of Robert Bruce by John Barbour, it may be proper to premise some particulars concerning the author"⁶⁵. In all, Hailes uses Barbour in support of his observations on 92 occasions, 42 of which are in conjunction with other sources, and 50 where *The Bruce* is the sole source. Dependence on Barbour as a sole source is more evident in the period up to and including the battle of Bannockburn (34 out of 50); in this period, *The Bruce* is used as a joint source in 21 out of 42 occasions. Sole use of Barbour occurs especially in the aftermath of Methven to the escape to Rathlin⁶⁶. *The Bruce* is often used as a source for incidents specific to the king⁶⁷, Edward Bruce⁶⁸, and James Douglas⁶⁹. As noted above, the battle of Bannockburn features significantly⁷⁰. Other aspects of

⁶² Dalrymple, Sir David, Lord Hailes, *Annals of Scotland from the Accession of Malcolm III to the Accession of the House of Stewart*, 2 volumes, Edinburgh, 1776, Volume 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 354-357.

⁶⁵ Hailes, *Annals*, volume 2, note, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 24, 40, 64, 66, 96, 105.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 40.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 25, 104, 135, 136.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44, 46-52.

military conflict also figure quite prominently: the invasion of Lorn⁷¹, the taking of Linlithgow peel⁷², a battle in Ireland⁷³, the capture of Berwick⁷⁴, the defence of Berwick⁷⁵, the Chapter of Myton⁷⁶, and an instance from the Weardale campaign⁷⁷. In addition, Hailes uses Barbour twice for what can only be described as "local colour". The first example is a physical description of Thomas Randolph⁷⁸; the second is Earl Warenne's reaction to the failed English invasion of 1322⁷⁹. It is clear that, even when using Barbour as his primary source, Hailes is occasionally quite cautious. For example, Barbour is twice associated with tradition⁸⁰, once he "asserts"⁸¹, once he "relates"⁸², and Hailes is openly doubtful about his account of the battle of Slane in Ireland⁸³. He even goes so far as to give a general health warning about using Barbour as a source⁸⁴:

"It must be acknowledged, that, in the narrative of Barbour, some adventures are recorded that have a romantic, and others that have a fabulous, appearance. To separate what may be true, or false, would be a laborious task, and might lead into a longer enquiry than the nature of this work will admit".

Notwithstanding, it is clear overall that Hailes considered *The Bruce* as a useful and often reliable source.

Following Hailes, there were a number of apparently derivative general histories of Scotland published throughout the nineteenth century - derivative of Hailes certainly, and probably of one another too as the series extended. The first was written by Tytler⁸⁵ in 1828, a scholarly and carefully annotated work in four volumes

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89, 91.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 102.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸⁵ Tytler, Patrick Fraser, *History of Scotland*, 4 volumes, 2nd. edition, Edinburgh, 1828.

covering the period from the accession of Alexander III to the Union. For the period 1306-1332, Tytler frequently acknowledges the pioneering work of Hailes, and it may be argued that he based his historical methodology on the latter. Here and there, he puts forward different interpretations, usually well supported. Like Hailes, he accepts Barbour as a source, though he uses *The Bruce*, with less reservation. Wright's⁸⁶ history, published circa 1865, is more of a synthesis of earlier works; the analysis is less professional, and it was probably meant to reach a wider public than Tytler's version. It was published in four volumes, covering from "the earliest period" to the early nineteenth century, though it takes less than fifty pages to arrive at the accession of Alexander III. Wright also makes heavy use of Barbour, and is even less discriminating than Tytler. Indeed, he admits to straight derivation in the case of the battle of Bannockburn⁸⁷ and the siege of Berwick⁸⁸.

John Hill Burton's *History of Scotland* was published in 1867⁸⁹. His use of Barbour is more careful than Wright, and perhaps more akin to Hailes. He clearly accepts the poet as a reliable source, though to be used with care: "It has been accepted pretty freely into history, even by the dry and doubting Lord Hailes"⁹⁰. Burton references *The Bruce* in footnotes where there is no other source: for example, the Mac na Dorsair attack on King Robert at Dail Righ, James Douglas's support for the ladies after Dail Righ, the king's defence of the ford against pursuers, the pursuit with the king's own bloodhound, the Douglas Larder incident, and the sow that "farrowed" at the siege of Berwick. Otherwise he follows other documentary and chronicle sources, supplementing these where necessary with additional material from *The Bruce*.

⁸⁶ Wright, Thomas, *History of Scotland*, 4 volumes, Edinburgh, 1865.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110.

⁸⁹ Burton, John Hill, *History of Scotland from the Earliest Period*, 8 volumes, Edinburgh, 1867 (new edition 1897).

⁹⁰ Burton, *History*, volume 2, note on p. 254.

In 1870, the equivalent of a modern "part-work" was published anonymously⁹¹, entitled *The Pictorial History of Scotland*. In eight volumes, it covers the period from the Roman invasion to the battle of Culloden, taking some 75 pages to arrive at the accession of Alexander III. This work represents a curious amalgam; it is clearly meant to be as accessible as Wright is, but great care is taken (at least for the period 1306-1332) to quote sources and cross-references. The underlying debt to Hailes is obvious and, again, Barbour is freely used as a source. Thomson's⁹² six-volume history was published in 1893 and may have been aimed at a slightly more discerning readership than the *Pictorial History*. The scholarship involved, however, is not of a higher order than its predecessor for the period 1306-1332. Indeed, in many places, it leans heavily on Barbour without acknowledgement of the source. This may be hidden from the lay reader, but is immediately apparent to anyone aware of the events reported by Barbour.

At the turn of the century (1900) Lang⁹³ published a two-volume history similar in style and purpose to Wright's earlier work, though he makes significantly more effort to annotate and provide sources for the 1306-1332 period than the latter. This history perhaps marked the start of a trend that was to develop throughout the twentieth century, less dependence on *Scotichronicon*, more on *Scalacronica* and *Lanercost*. Also apparent is an affectation that would become more common in later years - the tendency to use Barbour as a source but with infrequent attribution. Though the nature of Lang's synthesis makes it sometimes impossible to be certain of his sources, in other places it is readily apparent that he is using details only available from *The Bruce*.

The propensity to draw on Barbour as a source is illustrated in Appendix 1, which analyses 54 separate incidents or aspects from *The Bruce* that are used in one or more of the six general histories of Scotland described above. In each case, an

⁹¹ Anonymous, *Pictorial History of Scotland*, 8 volumes, London, 1870.

⁹² Thomson, Thomas, *History of the Scottish People*, 6 volumes, Glasgow, 1893.

⁹³ Lang, Andrew, *History of Scotland*, 2 volumes, Edinburgh, 1900.

incident is noted under a particular work if it is clear that the description derives wholly or partly from Barbour, and where details are specific to Barbour. As a contra-example, all six general histories contain a version of the Bruce/Comyn deal, but only in Thomson are the details unequivocally Barbour. In the other five cases, either the details come from *Scalacronica* and/or *Scotichronicon*, or the synthesis is constructed in such a way that Barbour's contribution cannot be easily recognised. About three-quarters of the incidents occur in the period up to and including the battle of Bannockburn, an even higher proportion than for Hailes (above). Thomson uses 46 of the 54 incidents, Tytler and *Pictorial History* 44 each; as expected, the more synthesised histories use fewer, 32 by Wright 23 by Lang, and only 20 by Burton. The overall impression of Appendix 1 is to underline the apparent importance of *The Bruce* to developing a full impression of the period, especially up to and including the battle of Bannockburn. Eleven incidents are used by all six of the general histories, 11 by combinations of five of them, 10 by combinations of four, and 10 by combinations of three. For the latter two cases, the large majority of "non-use" is attributable to Wright, Burton and Lang. Removing these three from consideration, the very high correspondence between Tytler, *Pictorial History* and Thomson becomes clear. Thirty-four out of 54 incidents appear in all three histories, and a further twelve incidents occur in combinations of two of the histories. This is not necessarily an indication of derivativity, but it does suggest that, in the nineteenth century, a significant proportion of Barbour's poem was considered as an important source for Scottish historiography. More specifically, Barbour makes a critical contribution in these general histories to the 1306-1310 period, to the events of 1314, and to the taking and defence of Berwick in 1318-19.

Another factor may explain why Tytler, Thomson and the *Pictorial History* used so much of Barbour's material. According to Brunsden⁹⁴, there were twelve printings

⁹⁴ Brunsden, George M., "Aspects of Scotland's Social, Political and Cultural Scene in the late 17th and early 18th Centuries, as Mirrored in the Wallace and Bruce Tradition", in E.J. Cowan and D. Gifford (eds.), *The Polar Twins*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 75-113.

of *The Bruce* in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and thirty-seven printings of Hary's *Wallace*). These were largely "popular" editions, addressing as wide an audience as possible. Thus, the nineteenth century reading public for the six general histories noted above (Tytler, Thomson and the *Pictorial History* in particular), may well have had certain expectations in terms of the Bruce and Wallace traditions that had to be fed. It is also possible that these expectations were experienced, to varying extents, by the authors themselves.

Sir Walter Scott was not, of course, an historian. However, his historical novels and other history-based works had a very significant impact on the environment within which Scottish history was written for a large part of the nineteenth century. In particular, his *Tales of a Grandfather* (first published in 1827) surely emphasised the historical content of Barbour's *Bruce*. His treatment of King Robert's reign follows Barbour very closely indeed⁹⁵, occasionally including other non-historical and/or non-traditional material like the legend of the spider. Interestingly, he includes the names and/or exploits of a number of Barbour's "commoners" including Cuthbert of Carrick, Thomas Dickson, William Francis, William Bunnock, and the pregnant laundress. Scott also follows Barbour faithfully throughout the battle of Bannockburn⁹⁶, though he also includes the invented "calthrops".

It is clear that, in this period, *The Bruce* was used more extensively as a source than was the case in the Enlightenment histories noted above. In addition, the impact of Hailes' "critical detachment and rigorous source scholarship⁹⁷" on Scottish historiographers of the following generation was direct and far-reaching. The use of Barbour from Tytler to Lang shows, indifferent measures, a debt to Hailes' scrutiny and evaluation of *The Bruce*. Unfortunately, his balanced approach to Barbour's material was mirrored less by other historiographers as time went on, and use of *The Bruce* as a source tended to become somewhat indiscriminate.

⁹⁵ Scott, Sir Walter, *Tales of a Grandfather*, London, 1893, pp. 25-43.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

⁹⁷ Lynch, *Oxford Companion*, p. 306.

Modern Histories

Over the course of the twentieth century, the nature and style of general Scottish histories changed substantially. One-volume histories required compression and tight synthesis; unless specifically annotated, it becomes more difficult to identify the contribution of the various sources, including Barbour. Hume Brown's⁹⁸ history (1908) had previously been published in a somewhat different form for use in schools. The popular version retained much of the accessibility idiom. However, the then Historiographer-Royal for Scotland also sourced from *The Bruce* incidents such as the battle of Dail Righ and the escape to Rathlin⁹⁹, the invasion of Carrick with various subsequent exploits of the king and James Douglas¹⁰⁰, and the events of 1314¹⁰¹. He also includes some details of the Irish campaign¹⁰², and of the burial of the king's heart and the body of Douglas¹⁰³. In this use of Barbour, Hume Brown resembles Lang rather than Tytler (see previous section). The attenuation of critical use of *The Bruce* as a source from the high point of Hailes' *Annals* might be regarded as having reached a nadir in Hume Brown's treatment.

Some fifty years later, Dickinson's¹⁰⁴ history had moved on a long way. Beautifully crafted though minimally annotated, it could reasonably claim to be the most professional analysis since Hailes, and took advantage of much new research since the publication of *Annals*. Within the wide synthesis of many sources, Barbour's material seems to be implicitly overlaid and shows directly only in details like the Herschip of Buchan, the battle under Ben Cruachan¹⁰⁵, and aspects of

⁹⁸ Hume Brown, P., *A Short History of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1908.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-158.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-168.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.176.

¹⁰⁴ Dickinson, W. Croft, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, 3rd. edition, revised and edited by A.A.M Duncan, Oxford, 1976.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Bannockburn¹⁰⁶. It may be that Dickinson's more meticulous use of Barbour was partly as a reaction to the more accepting approach of Hume Brown.

Mackie's¹⁰⁷ even more abridged history (1964) continued the trend of blending previous works, and was perhaps compiled mainly or entirely from secondary sources. It is completely without annotation and covers the period 1306-1332 in only eight pages. Yet material from Barbour may be clearly detected in references to the king on Loch Lomondside, the Herschip of Buchan, the capture of Randolph by Douglas, the taking of Forfar castle, and elements of the battle of Bannockburn.

Mitchison's¹⁰⁸ single volume history (1970) gives even less space to our period (5 pages), and virtually no cognisance of Barbour, apart from a reference to the Herschip of Buchan and a few details of Bannockburn. However, it must be observed that this work gives little indication of original research or interpretation, resembling more closely a synthesis of earlier works.

The process of removing Barbour from the history of our period culminates in Lynch's¹⁰⁹ single volume work published in 1992. Though highly condensed, this is a fine piece of scholarship, well annotated, with many fresh interpretations and alternatives. However, in the relevant pages, Barbour is completely absent from the references and notes, and there is no single incident or aspect of the 1306-1332 period that could be drawn only from Barbour. This may be partly explained by the view that Lynch's purpose was to synthesise the "prolific outpouring of research over the last thirty years¹¹⁰".

Two major multi-volume histories of Scotland were published in the latter part of the twentieth century. Nicholson's contribution to the four-volume *Edinburgh History of Scotland* was published in 1974. It perhaps reverts to Hailes in the manner of using Barbour for the 1306-1332 period. Nicholson¹¹¹ regards the poem as "as an

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167.

¹⁰⁷ Mackie, J.D., *A History of Scotland*, London, 1964, pp. 73-76.

¹⁰⁸ Mitchison, Rosalind, *A History of Scotland*, London, 1970, pp. 46-48.

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, Michael, *Scotland: a New History*, London, 1992, pp. 120-128.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹¹¹ Nicholson, Ranald, *Scotland: The Late Middle Age*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 626.

essential source for the reign of Robert I" and, as noted earlier, quotes Barbour in 45 out of 320 footnotes covering the period. In common with the rest of the series, Nicholson's volume represents a very high level of historical scholarship, and he is careful in quoting the "essential" Barbour. In some ways, his use of Barbour reflects that of the nineteenth century historians (set out above) in his sourcing of more popular incidents: the return to Carrick via Arran, the Herschip of Buchan, the Douglas Larder, the battle under Ben Cruachan, the taking of Perth and Linlithgow Peel, the capture of Roxburgh and Edinburgh, Bannockburn, the taking and defence of Berwick, the Chapter of Myton, the battle of Byland, and the burial of the king's heart at Melrose. Nicholson's idiosyncratic use of Barbour is more interesting, in that he tends to pick out a detail of an incident to reflect, from time to time, the direction of his narrative. For example, he notes that Douglas was with the king after Methven, and that he (the king) had lost the trust of the common folk with the battle¹¹². He observes that the king was borne in a litter for part of the Buchan campaign, and that he had 700 men with him at Slioch¹¹³. He notes that the king rebukes his brother for making the Stirling agreement with Sir Philip Mowbray¹¹⁴, though perhaps Duncan's rendering of "criticises" is closer to the poet's meaning¹¹⁵. Writing about the thirteen-year truce, Nicholson emphasises that a principle reason for its breakdown lay in the king's failure to achieve redress from Caernarfon for English piracy against Scots shipping¹¹⁶. Alone among general historians, Nicholson draws on *The Bruce* for his description of the grief-stricken reaction in Scotland to the king's death¹¹⁷. The similarity of Hailes' and Nicholson's approach to Barbour has been referred to. In both cases, it is reasonable to suggest that the overall painstaking scrutiny of sources implies a degree of confidence in Barbour.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 407.

¹¹⁶ Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 117.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Grant's *Independence and Nationhood*, issued in 1984, was the third of eight volumes of *The New History of Scotland*. It appears to represent quite a different approach than that of Nicholson. In his treatment of the 1306-1332 period, Grant aligns with the Mackie-Mitchison-Lynch progression, in that reference to and incidents from Barbour are, apart from a reference to Rathlin and another to Sir Walter Gilbertson, wholly absent from the 28 pages devoted to our period. John Barbour is briefly mentioned, perhaps as an after-thought, as a chronicler of late-medieval Scotland in an appendix¹¹⁸. The approach of Grant and Lynch could hardly contrast more starkly with Nicholson's systematic but careful use of Barbour as a source.

Focused Histories

Turning now to the more focused historical analyses, we again see a range of approaches for John Barbour as a source. White's popular *History of Bannockburn* quotes from 57 authorities in all, including Boece, Buchanan, Hailes and Tytler¹¹⁹. However, even the most cursory glance through the 139 pages of text makes it clear which is White's major source, with literally hundreds of lines of the poem being directly reproduced, and very many more translated into prose with minimal additional interpretation. Such blanket use of Barbour does little to support *The Bruce* as a reliable source; rather, it leaves the impression that Barbour was a convenient source, and that his word pictures related well to White's overall purpose of writing a popular history.

MacKenzie's revolutionary account of Bannockburn¹²⁰ is firmly based on four main sources: *Scalacronica*, *Lanercost*, *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, and *The Bruce*. It would appear, however, that the main narrative line is based firmly on Barbour, though with much more meticulous analysis and evaluation than White. Morris took

¹¹⁸ Grant, Alexander, *Independence and Nationhood*, London, 1984, p. 221.

¹¹⁹ White, R., *A History of the Battle of Bannockburn*, Edinburgh, 1871, pp. xxi-xxiii.

¹²⁰ MacKenzie, William Mackay, *The Battle of Bannockburn*, Glasgow, 1913.

much the same approach¹²¹ though his focus was on tactics and logistics, whereas MacKenzie's main interest was in the location of the battle. The main interest of Maxwell¹²² and Miller¹²³ was to refute MacKenzie, the former because he wished to defend the traditional (and now totally discredited) site of the battle, the latter because MacKenzie had been critical of Maxwell's earlier *Life of Robert the Bruce*¹²⁴. Miller was prepared to use Barbour (with some interesting interpretations) or ignore him as suited his main purpose. Miller's work adds little to an assessment of Barbour as a source.

In dealing with Bannockburn, Maxwell found himself unable to ignore Barbour, perhaps because he had used this source so intensively in his *Life of Robert the Bruce*. He was, however, happy to cast doubt on Barbour on the basis that "he cannot be accepted as a competent critic" on military matters¹²⁵. This can hardly be taken as a serious appraisal of *The Bruce* as a reliable source. It may be noted in passing that MacKenzie's aggressive riposte to Miller also demonstrated a careful defence of his original sources¹²⁶, and perhaps most especially of Barbour.

More recently, Nusbacher has produced a military study of the battle of Bannockburn. At the outset, he seems disinclined to take Barbour too seriously as a source¹²⁷, but his account of the battle depends as much on the poet as on any other source. Perhaps his dependence on Eyre-Todd's prose translation of *The Bruce* should sound a note of warning about this version of the battle, though Nusbacher does develop a most interesting theory of troop movements on the second day. Scott's highly idiosyncratic approach dismisses Barbour altogether as a useful

¹²¹ Morris, John E., *Bannockburn*, Cambridge, 1914.

¹²² Maxwell, Sir Herbert, "The Battle of Bannockburn", *Scottish Historical Review*, XI (43), April 1914, pp. 232-251.

¹²³ Miller, Thomas, *The Site of the Battle of Bannockburn*, Historical Association Leaflet No. 85, London, 1931.

¹²⁴ Maxwell, Sir Herbert, *Robert the Bruce and the struggle for Scottish Independence*, London, 1897.

¹²⁵ Maxwell, Sir Herbert, The Battle of Bannockburn, *Scottish Historical Review*, XI (43), April 1914, p. 244.

¹²⁶ MacKenzie, William Mackay, *The Bannockburn Myth*, Edinburgh, 1932.

¹²⁷ Nusbacher, Aryeh, *The Battle of Bannockburn 1314*, Stroud, 2000, pp. 11-13.

source¹²⁸, though it becomes clear that he is prepared to reject any source material that does not conform to his view of the battle. There is much interesting analysis in Scott's volume, but it is extremely poorly organised. Indeed, the ordering of his chapter headings and sub-headings suggests a fairly random approach to the writing of the text. Despite his early dismissal of Barbour, *The Bruce* is led in evidence frequently throughout.

Some writers have taken "The War of Independence" as a focus. Early among these, Burns produced a two-volume polemic in 1875, arguing against what he saw (with some justification) as an anti-Scottish bias among a number of English historians. He draws occasionally on *Lanercost*, much more frequently on Hailes, Tytler and other general historians, but his essential source is Barbour. He seems to place implicit, but nowhere justified, faith in *The Bruce*, stating¹²⁹ indeed that "Barbour was not, in the strictest sense, a contemporary writer, but he may be all the more trustworthy on that account". He makes extensive and largely uncritical use of Barbour's material, including all the incidents that have been identified earlier in this chapter. It may be fairly concluded that Burns' work is a synthesis, primarily of *The Bruce* together with the writing of other historians who, in turn, drew substantially from John Barbour. Burns' evaluation of Barbour as a source, accordingly, begets no more confidence than White's.

Despite his predisposition to accept English accounts as more trustworthy than Scottish, Maxwell¹³⁰ notes that Barbour "has given a lively and faithful picture of the times". He goes on to draw heavily from the poet in much the same way as Burns, though without the latter's disputatious overtones. In particular, as we may by now expect, he is dependent on *The Bruce* where Barbour covers incidents or gives information that appear nowhere else; for example, accounts of the early life of James Douglas¹³¹, and the capture and defence of Berwick¹³². Even in his account of

¹²⁸ Scott, William W.C., *Bannockburn Revealed*, Rothesay, 2000, pp. 66-68.

¹²⁹ Burns, W., *The Scottish War of Independence*, 2 volumes, Glasgow, 1874, volume 2, p. 160.

¹³⁰ Maxwell, Sir Herbert, *The Making of Scotland*, Glasgow, 1911, p. 117.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Bannockburn, where he openly prefers the account given in *Scalacronica*, he is obliged to insert a substantial amount of material drawn from Barbour. Oman focussed even more narrowly on the battles of Loudoun Hill and Bannockburn, and his range of sources includes a cautious use of Barbour "...if we can trust the details - sufficiently probable in themselves - that Barbour gives.....¹³³". His account of Bannockburn, originally sketched out in 1885 but substantially revised and extended in 1924, reflected what was to become a standard treatment for successive writers: selective and conservative use of *Vita*, *Scalacronica*, *Lanercost*, and *The Bruce*, but with Barbour being used as the essential narrative link.

Barron¹³⁴ covers the period up to and including Bannockburn. Despite obvious polemic regarding the relative importance of "Celtic" and "Teutonic" Scotland in the struggle for independence, this is a highly professional work of historical analysis. Barbour is directly quoted on 54 separate occasions, often as supplementary evidence according to Barron's stated approach¹³⁵. He often omits information where Barbour is the only source (for example, the early life of James Douglas), otherwise using the warning "according to Barbour" (for example, the capture of Forfar castle¹³⁶). This fits well with Barron's overall strategy of depending only on reliable or cross-checked data, so that no attention is diverted from his thesis about the critical role played by Celtic Scotland in support of King Robert.

Young¹³⁷ concentrates on the part played by the Comyns and, unsurprisingly, is distinctly revisionary in his coverage of King Robert. Although Bannockburn is dismissed in a few paragraphs¹³⁸ and John Barbour described as "a partisan Bruce source"¹³⁹, Young is obliged to introduce the poet directly as his key source for the Herschip of Buchan, indirectly for the king's victories at Glen Trool and Loudoun

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

¹³³ Oman, Sir Charles, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, 2 volumes, London, 1924, volume 2, pp. 83-100.

¹³⁴ Barron, Evan MacLeod, *The Scottish War of Independence*, 2nd edition, Inverness, 1934.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹³⁷ Young, Alan, *Robert the Bruce's Rivals: The Comyns, 1212-1314*, East Linton, 1997.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Hill, and for details of the Buchan campaign¹⁴⁰. In these indirect references, Young uses a technique that is not uncommon among other writers - he quotes Barrow¹⁴¹ in evidence. When we look up the relevant references in Barrow, we find that they are, in turn, dependent on Barbour. McNamee's use of Barbour is even more attenuated though, again, he refers often to other writers who have more frequently and openly sourced *The Bruce*. He eschews the early life of James Douglas, but follows Barbour in his brief account of Douglas' private struggle to regain his patrimony from Clifford¹⁴²; he draws on the Herschip of Buchan¹⁴³, and mentions the capture of Forfar castle¹⁴⁴. This cautious treatment is replicated throughout McNamee's coverage of the period up to 1328. Traquair's¹⁴⁵ approach is similar to that of Nicholson's general history, a cautious supplementary use of Barbour combined with a willingness to source from the poem where no other information is available and to use *The Bruce* as an underlying link to the narrative. There is a number of cases where Barbour is used as a source without specific attribution: the battle of Dail Righ and the Loch Lomond incidents¹⁴⁶; the return to Carrick via Arran¹⁴⁷; the Douglas Larder¹⁴⁸; the battle of Loudoun Hill¹⁴⁹; the capture of Forfar castle¹⁵⁰; and, inevitably, Bannockburn¹⁵¹. Though not to be taken as a professional analysis, Traquair's work mirrors closely the conscientious approach to synthesis used by Nicholson and originally developed by Hailes.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-03.

¹⁴¹ Barrow, *Bruce*.

¹⁴² McNamee, Colm, *The Wars of the Bruces*, East Linton, 1997, p. 40.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ Traquair, Peter, *Freedom's Sword: Scotland's Wars of Independence*, London, 1998.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-195.

Biographies

The most recent biography¹⁵² of Longshanks completely ignores Barbour. That of Caernarfon¹⁵³ sources from the poet, but only one episode – the defence of Berwick¹⁵⁴ - is directly attributed to him. Nicholson's¹⁵⁵ use of Barbour in his book about Edward III (Windsor) and the Scots anticipates that of his general history, described earlier, but there is clearly less scope for the 1327-1332 period. Historians who deal specifically with Edward Bruce's time in Ireland¹⁵⁶ make only passing direct reference to Barbour, preferring to depend on a number of Irish chronicles, especially Pembridge's annals. Armstrong, however, does use Barbour as an important supplementary source.

There have been a number of biographies of King Robert and, to avoid fruitless repetition we will refer to three that represent the various historical approaches to depicting his life and achievements. Maxwell's¹⁵⁷ was published in 1897 and its use of Bruce is typical of that period (cf. Murison¹⁵⁸). At the outset he suggests that Barbour "has been almost irretrievably discredited as a chronicle by a monstrous liberty that the author takes in rolling three personages into one ideal hero¹⁵⁹". This rather insensible comment refers to the poet's supposed confusion and merging of Robert Bruce the claimant in the Great Cause, his anglophilic son Robert Bruce who became earl of Carrick, and his grandson Robert Bruce who became king. Maxwell also charges¹⁶⁰ that Barbour's motivation was to write to please King Robert II "otherwise the royal bounty may have been checked at its source". [These claims will be considered below in Chapters 2 and 10 respectively]. Surprisingly, Maxwell then

¹⁵² Prestwich, Michael, *Edward I*, London, 1988.

¹⁵³ Saaler, Mary, *Edward II*, London, 1997.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵ Nicholson, Ranald, *Edward III and the Scots*, Oxford, 1965.

¹⁵⁶ For example: Armstrong, O., *Edward Bruce's Invasion of Ireland*, London, 1923; Chatterton-Newman, Roger, *Edward Bruce - a Medieval Tragedy*, Cambridge, 1992; Duffy, Seán, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, Basingstoke, 1997, (Chapter 6).

¹⁵⁷ Maxwell, Sir. Herbert, *Robert the Bruce and the Struggle for Scottish Independence*, London, 1897.

¹⁵⁸ Murison, A. F., *King Robert the Bruce*, Edinburgh, 1899.

¹⁵⁹ Maxwell, *Struggle*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

goes on to claim¹⁶¹ that *The Bruce* "is of great merit as a narrative of the events of [the War of Independence] and of the conduct and acts of those who took part in it". This is perhaps as well, or Maxwell may have found difficulty in filling the 370 pages of his biography. For the 1306-1329 period, he uses Barbour extensively as a supplementary source and as a basic narrative line. He also makes similarly extensive use of Barbour where he is a sole source, with only the occasional "we are told..." as a cautionary note. This indiscriminate use of Barbour perhaps most closely resembles the treatment of *Pictorial History of Scotland* evaluated above.

Idiosyncratically, Maxwell also excuses the worst behaviour of King Robert's opponents (especially Longshanks), and almost unfailingly suggests the most positive possible motivation for English action. He is severely taken to task for this in MacKenzie's life of the king¹⁶². This work is poorly annotated compared to Maxwell, but it appears that she has taken the same line with Barbour - used as a primary source when he alone describes an event, as supplementary evidence in other cases, and as an anchor for the main narrative line.

Barrow's biography is altogether on a higher level of scholarship. He accesses a very wide range of sources (though, unfortunately, does not list them) and develops a synthesis that is highly credible in most cases. He gives a summary of his (positive) evaluation of Barbour as a source¹⁶³, e.g.:

"But Barbour, though only a boy when Bruce died, was a most careful and exact recorder, especially of names, personalities, incidents and points of detail. We shall not be on unsafe ground if we accept Barbour's portrait of the king, even though we must correct it by more reliable evidence wherever this is necessary and possible."

Barrow uses Barbour throughout the period 1306-1329 as a useful supplementary source. Where he has *The Bruce* as a sole source, he often adds a cautionary "as Barbour tells us", in, for example, the taking of Forfar castle¹⁶⁴. At

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶² MacKenzie, Agnes Mure, *Robert Bruce King of Scots*, Edinburgh, 1934.

¹⁶³ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 312-313.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

other places, he includes Barbour-specific information without comment including the Loch Lomond adventure¹⁶⁵, Randolph's return to the king's service¹⁶⁶, the attack of the small folk in the latter stages of the battle of Bannockburn¹⁶⁷, the defence of Berwick by Sir Walter Stewart¹⁶⁸, and the burial of the king's heart and the bones of Sir James Douglas¹⁶⁹. Perhaps the Barbour-specific items not used by Barrow are of even more interest. These include the early life of James Douglas, the four attacks on the king by three men, the three attacks on Douglas castle, the pursuit of the tracker dog and the king's defence of the ford, the skirmish at Edirford, and the capture of Randolph by Douglas. These will be considered in depth in Chapter 4 below.

Summary

This chapter has analysed the use made of Barbour from 1518 to 2000 in histories of various kinds. No single trend or characteristic may be identified, but it is clear that Barbour was used only lightly as a source until Hailes published his *Annals* in 1776, after which he was heavily used - occasionally somewhat indiscriminately - till Barrow's first edition of *Robert Bruce* in 1965 and Nicholson's *The Later Middle Ages* in 1974. Thereafter, Barbour appeared less as an explicit source, though his importance to the underlying narrative line was still perceptible. The development of historiographic methodology has meant that writers have come to use all sources for the period 1306-1329, including Barbour, in a supplementary manner where possible.

It may be suggested that this dissertation is, in part, a tendency since 1974 to treat Barbour as an untrustworthy witness to fourteenth century events. This is partly a misconception for three reasons. First, the contributions of nine writers, no matter how prominent, over a 26-year interval cannot yet be accepted as an opposing trend

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

to the approach of luminaries such as Hailes, Tytler, Hill Burton, Thomson, Oman, Mackenzie, Barrow and Nicholson. The value of the nine recent contributions is as a counterbalance and alternative perspective to what went before. It would be premature to argue specifically against this recent tendency until it has been more fully developed in depth and in number of dimensions. Second, and more specifically, use of *The Bruce* as a source from 1776 to 1974, much of the time as part of rigorous analysis and objective evaluation, certainly indicates trust in Barbour. On the other hand, lack of use (but without direct criticism) of Barbour as a source does not imply untrustworthiness. In some cases it may merely be due to the condensed nature of an individual work, in others due to the degree of synthesis involved. Third, it may be more apposite to identify the thrust of this dissertation as an assessment of the judgement made between 1776 and 1974 that Barbour's *Bruce* is a valid and trustworthy source for the reign of Robert I.

Attempts to justify the use of *The Bruce* as a source have varied from Maxwell's rather insensate assessment in 1897 to Barrow's brief though inclusive evaluation of 1965/1976/1988. There is little dispute where Barbour is confirmed by other sources. Of more interest are the information and incidents where the confirmation is partial or contradictory, and where no confirmation at all is possible for other sources. Reflecting on the quotation at the head of this chapter confirms the overall rationale of this dissertation (set out in detail below in Chapter 3): our view of King Robert will, indeed, always depend on the extent to which we accept Barbour's authority. The next chapter will begin the assessment of this authority.

Chapter 2

Barbour and *The Bruce* in fourteenth century Scotland

“John Barbour’s *Bruce* is the birthing of a nation¹.”

Social and political context

John Barbour was, above all, a man of his times. The dynastic and cross-border turbulence he lived through had started some forty years before his birth and was to continue for up to a century after his death. In his youth, he may well have encountered some who retained distant memories of the “golden age” of King Alexander III [1249-86]. He would certainly have spoken to, and possibly drawn inspiration from, those who had participated directly in the first two phases of the War of Independence; and he experienced the highs and lows of the third phase at first hand. He witnessed the firm establishment of the Stewart dynasty, and among his younger contemporaries would be some that survived to play a part in the machinations of the minority of James II [1437-60].

Barbour must have met some who remembered the words and actions of King John Balliol, who suffered defeat at Dunbar and Falkirk, and tasted the victories of Stirling Bridge and Roslin. Some who signed the Ragman Roll survived into Barbour’s lifetime, as well as some who opposed King Robert to the end and beyond. We know he encountered veterans of the early defeats and subsequent triumphs of King Robert, and their memories of him would be strong and emotional, if sometimes hazy. It is likely that he shared personally in the national trauma that followed the death of the King, the startling defeat at Dupplin Moor and the massacre at Halidon Hill. He advanced toward manhood during the minority of King David II, and must have shared in the despair that followed Neville’s Cross with the subsequent eleven-year captivity of King David. The despair was probably

¹ Mackie, J.D. “A History of Scotland”, 2nd. edition, London, 1978, p. 84.

heightened, as Grant² has pointed out, because the invasion and battle did not constitute a strategic necessity, and because, afterwards, English tactics concentrated on frightening Scotland. Peace with England in 1357 allowed Barbour to travel to England and France where he may well have consulted other commentators and spoken to veterans of past actions. After 1371, he was involved in the administration of King Robert II and, no doubt, was a keen observer of the accession of his patron's son in 1390. Thus, John Barbour participated, indirectly and directly, in an era that saw the idea of a free kingdom of Scotland almost obliterated on three separate occasions, with subsequent strong and eventually permanent revival. Born in a period that saw the supremacy of Scottish military tactics, Barbour must also have been aware of the awesome rise of the English longbow as a dominant battlefield weapon. Initial success at Falkirk by Longshanks was followed by the failure of Caernarfon to use archers properly at Bannockburn. Under Windsor, however, burgeoning success came at Halidon Hill, Crécy and Poitiers. More importantly, however, Barbour could also attest to the radical, and ultimately successful, Scottish military strategy of wearing out the aggressor by combined use of time, space, weather, thirst, starvation and indefatigable skirmishing. He must also have had direct knowledge of Bertrand du Guesclin's efficacious adoption of a similar strategy against the English invaders in the 1370s.

It is natural, then, that the motif of national survival against external aggression should appear so prominently in Scottish writing that emerged over a 100-year period. Barbour's *Bruce* (1375) and Blind Hary's *Wallace* (1478), both in vernacular verse, focus on two key individuals in the national struggle, though the latter is notably more anglophobic and its historicity has been criticised. Three works put the period within the overall context of chronicle history. Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scots Nation* (1385) is a balanced prose account, written in Latin, subsequently amended and extended with strong nationalist overtones in Bower's *Scotichronicon*

² Grant, Alexander, "Disaster at Neville's Cross: The Scottish Point of View", in David Rollason and Michael Prestwich (eds.), *The Battle of Neville's Cross 1346*, Stamford, 1998, pp. 15-35.

(1445). Broun³ has recently highlighted a distinction between Fordun's *Chronicle* (which covers the period up to 1153) and the notes he added (which Skene⁴ called *Gesta Annalia*). Bower used Fordun's *Chronicle* as the basis for the first five books of *Scotichronicon*, and part of the sixth. Broun concludes that Fordun was not, even by the standards of medieval historiography, the author of *Gesta*, and that it may not have been Fordun himself who attached the *Gesta* material to the *Chronicle*. Between Fordun and Bower comes Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* (1420), delivered in vernacular verse of a lower calibre than Barbour's or Blind Hary's, but reflecting Fordun's rational and balanced recording of events and individual contributions.

The first sixteen lines of Barbour's poem constitute a powerful argument for "suthfastnes" in his and similar ventures. True stories, he says, give added pleasure to listeners because of this very attribute of veracity; thus, he commits himself to truth in his poem so that it will be remembered and its lessons not forgotten. There seems little evidence, internal or external, that throws doubt on Barbour's claim to honesty, and no writer has done so in any meaningful way. Truth, however, must be differentiated from historical authenticity, and the inferential relationship is strictly unidirectional. Historical authenticity requires truth; but mistakenly held beliefs, misleading interpretation honestly arrived at, and faithfully held errors cannot contribute to satisfactory historicity.

In the two hundred years since Hailes' *Annals*, historians have evaluated *The Bruce* and broadly accepted Barbour's "suthfastnes" despite the doubts of some⁵. In recent years, however, such evaluation has not been sufficiently persuasive for his work to be used as a vital source. Nevertheless, wherever a detailed analysis has been carried out⁶, the assumption of the writer has been that John Barbour was the

³ Broun, Dauvit, "A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun", in Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 9-30.

⁴ Fordun, *Chronica: Johannes de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene, *Historians of Scotland*, volume 1, Edinburgh, 1871.

⁵ Våthjunker, Sonja, *A Study of the Career of Sir James Douglas – Historical Record versus Barbour's Bruce*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1992.

⁶ For example: Coldwell, David F.C., *The Literary Background of Barbour's 'Bruce'*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University 1947. Ebin, Louise, "John Barbour's Bruce: poetry, history,

sole author. No evidence for or against this assumption has been presented previously.

John Barbour died on 13 March 1395⁷. It is less certain when he was born. An early printed edition of the poem (Pinkerton, 1790) suggests 1326 without noting any evidence⁸. Lord Hailes (1776) calculates 1316⁹ on the basis that he “seems to speak from his own observation” when describing Thomas Randolph who died in 1331¹⁰. Barbour's description of the reaction to Randolph's death is certainly among the most personal of his observations. Jamieson, in his 1869 edition (first published 1820) of *The Bruce*, agrees with Hailes' date, but for different reasons¹¹. He argues that 1316 would fit with a reasonable age for Barbour when he was appointed to the responsible position of Archdeacon of Aberdeen in 1356/7¹². Innes does not make an estimate of Barbour's birth date, but notes that he was “a man of mature years” in 1357 when he attended Parliament as a proxy for his bishop¹³. Skeat's edition (1894) puts his birth year at 1320, using the same estimation approach as Hailes, but coming to a slightly different conclusion¹⁴. According to the poet's next editor (Mackenzie, 1909)¹⁵, “1320 is a good round guess”. One of the editors of the edition used for this dissertation (McDiarmid, 1985) suggests¹⁶ that 1325 “is indicated by the earliest references”. This view rests on the canon law evidence that “inferior orders of clergy were supposed to have reached the age of twenty five before being accepted by their Bishop, though for various reasons of expedience there were exceptions to the rule”. McDiarmid goes on to suggest directly from this that “by normal practice

and propaganda”, *Studies in Scottish Literature* 9, (1972), pp. 218-42.

⁷ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, eds. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. Stevenson, Edinburgh, 1980-85, (Scottish Text Society, 4th series, 12, 13, 15). p. 1.

⁸ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. J. Pinkerton, London, 1790, p. xviii.

⁹ Dalrymple, Sir David, Lord Hailes, *Annals of Scotland from the Accession of Malcolm III to the Accession of the House of Stewart*, 2 volumes, Edinburgh, 1776, Vol. 2, p. 3.

¹⁰ Actually in July 1332.

¹¹ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. John Jamieson, Glasgow, 1869, p. 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹³ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. Cosmos Innes, Aberdeen, 1856.

¹⁴ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 2 volumes, Edinburgh, 1894, Vol.1, p. xxix.

¹⁵ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. William Mackay Mackenzie, London, 1909, p. xv1.

¹⁶ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, 3 volumes, eds. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. Stevenson, Edinburgh, 1980-85 (Scottish Text Society, 4th series, 12, 13, 15), volume 1, p. 1.

“ Barbour would have been about thirty on assuming his archdeaconship. Most recently, Duncan¹⁷ has suggested 1325, but observes that Barbour could have been born as late as 1335. He seems to suggest that some special influence caused rapid promotion for Barbour, who would then be some twenty-two years old when he became Archdeacon of Aberdeen.

This span of nearly twenty years for Barbour’s birth year seems unreasonably wide. McDiarmid’s observation on the canon law limitation is an important indication. With influence and patronage working for him, as well as strong ambition, a fourteenth century priest might well have achieved an archdeaconate by the age of twenty-five. Normal progression might have led to such status by thirty. A worthy but unambitious candidate might have been obliged to wait until the age of forty. Virtually everything we know about John Barbour suggests either that he was not ambitious, or that he under-utilised his patron’s power, or both. For all his contact with King Robert II, he did not advance beyond his archdeaconate in the nearly forty years that remained of his life. Further, periods of study at Orléans, Oxford and Paris¹⁸, together with his literary work, suggest that John Barbour was wedded to his scholarship. Thus, the known date of Barbour’s becoming archdeacon (1356) suggests an earliest birth date of 1316 (corresponding with Hailes and Jamieson) and a latest of 1326 (close to Skeat, McDiarmid and Duncan). However, the argument of Hailes and Jamieson, coupled with the remarks above about the perceived level of Barbour’s ambition, would make 1316 the more likely birth date.

Mackenzie also suggests¹⁹ that Barbour’s family was from the Aberdeen area and his occupation-derived name indicates an urban context to Duncan²⁰. McDiarmid, however, thinks that the northeast is an unlikely area of origin²¹; he argues that the internal evidence of the poem relating to geography and topography makes it much

¹⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 2.

¹⁸ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, pp. 5-6.

¹⁹ Mackenzie, *Bruce*, p. xvi.

²⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 2.

²¹ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, pp. 1, 2-5.

more likely that Barbour came from the southwest. There is an Arbroath tradition²² that Barbour was born nearby and received his early education at the monastic school. It is not easy to reconcile this tradition with the complete absence of Arbroath (or even the famous Declaration) from Barbour's poem. According to Watt²³, Barbour gave up a precentorship of Dunkeld Cathedral in 1356 and was Archdeacon of Aberdeen by 1357, at which point he had a safe-conduct to go to Oxford with three scholars for study. In that year, he was also nominated as the precentor of the bishop and chapter of Aberdeen, to attend a discussion in Edinburgh about the final terms of the ransom of King David II. The importance of this appointment should not be over-rated. It was, for example, much less prestigious than that of one of the six ambassadors sent to Berwick for the final negotiations with the English. In 1364, another safe conduct took him back to Oxford, and possibly beyond. Further safe conducts allowed him to journey to France in 1365 and 1368. Following the accession of King Robert in 1371, Barbour came into more frequent contact with the royal administration, becoming a clerk of audit by 1373, and he is recorded again in this role in 1374, 1382, 1384 and 1385. He appears in papal communications in 1380 and 1387, and in relation to the wardship of one William Tullidaf in 1389 and 1392. He received a perpetual pension of £1 *per annum* in 1378, a number of small monetary favours from King Robert between 1382 and 1386, and a significant pension for life in 1388 of £10 *per annum*. From 1376 to 1392, he appears as witness in a number of matters that came within the scope of the Bishop of Aberdeen. The cessation of his annual pension and the transfer of his perpetual pension to the chapter of Aberdeen Cathedral for annual commemorative masses mark his death on 13 March 1395. According to Mackenzie²⁴, this annual mass was celebrated for "the compiler of the book of deeds of the former King Robert the Bruce" until the Reformation, after which the Archdeacon's legacy was

²² Hay, George, *History of Arbroath to the Present Time*, Arbroath, 1876, p. 54.

²³ Watt, D.E.R., *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to AD 1410*, Oxford, 1977, pp. 28-29.

²⁴ Mackenzie, *Bruce*, p. xviii.

applied to other purposes. However, no reference beyond 1498 may be found for this anniversary²⁵

Barbour's *Bruce* was written after the poet's foreign travels. The part up to the end of what is now designated Book 13 was certainly written by 1376, though Skeat²⁶ suggested 1375. McDiarmid²⁷, however, reproduces the strong evidence within the poem, which identifies March 1376 "no earlier and no later" as the completion point for Book 13. Duncan²⁸ suggests a minimum of two years writing time, but this may well have extended to five or six. According to McDiarmid²⁹, Books 14-20 were probably completed within two years of the end of the first phase. Taken together, this gives Barbour's start date as 1370, with a finish date of 1378. The poem has survived in two manuscripts, one at St, John's College, Cambridge (C), and the other in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh (E)³⁰.

The two manuscripts are not identical; E is virtually complete, but C has the first three books missing as well as the start of book 4. C seems to have been completed in 1487, E in 1489. A number of "versions" of these were printed until, in 1790, Pinkerton reverted to an accurate edition of the E manuscript. He added a glossary, but no textual or historical notes. He did, however, for the first time, divide Barbour's work into twenty "books" of between 530 and 950 lines each, arguing that this made the long poem more accessible³¹. This division has been the subject of much critical comment, not least because the segmentation is largely arbitrary. Jamieson's edition (1820) was also based on E, and has quite extensive, though not always helpful, textual and historical notes. Innes' 1856 edition was a synthesis of C and E, as he held both to be of equal authority³². Skeat's 1894 edition, based on E to Book 4 line 56, thereafter C, contained excellent textual analysis, but was less

²⁵ *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, volume 11, p. 130.

²⁶ Skeat, *Bruce*, volume 1, p. xxxi.

²⁷ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, p. 13.

²⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 3.

²⁹ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, p. 10.

³⁰ Mackenzie, *Bruce*, p. v.

³¹ Pinkerton, *Bruce*, p. viii.

³² Innes, *Bruce*, p. iv.

helpful on the historical side. Mackenzie's edition of 1909 redressed the balance, being "the first with thoroughly historical notes"³³. Two years previously, Eyre-Todd³⁴ had produced a prose translation. No doubt, this made Barbour's "story" more accessible, but it is a boring read. Douglas's 1964 verse translation is a more pleasing rendition and hardly departs from the content of the original in seeking rhyme. He believes *The Bruce* is "simultaneously a biography, a history, a poem, and a novel"³⁵. From 1980 to 1985, a three-volume edition by McDiarmid and Stevenson was published by the Scottish Text society. This returned to the E manuscript for reasons of language form, and it contains thorough textual analysis as well as helpful historical notes. Finally Duncan's 1997 edition has the poem in its original form (slightly amended from McDiarmid, but also bearing Skeat's line numbering) on the right hand pages, with a prose translation opposite. Duncan gives a suitable warning about reliance on the translation; he is right to do so, for it is often clumsy and inconsistent in style. However, as might be expected, this edition also contains some excellent historical notes, particularly comparisons with other sources. As Duncan's analysis will be helpful to the present study, his edition will be used as the basis for the dissertation, with McDiarmid's more authoritative version - "a scholar's delight"³⁶ - as a source of final resort.

Literary context

It may well have been a remark of Lord Hailes³⁷ that first focused attention on Barbour's *Bruce* as a work of literature when he observed "There is reason to believe that the language of Barbour, obsolete as it may now seem, has been modernised by some officious transcriber". Pinkerton³⁸ (1790) set Barbour's poem in the context of the best French, Spanish, Danish and English medieval poetry, and seemed to accept

³³ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 32.

³⁴ Eyre-Todd, George, *The Bruce: The History of Robert the Bruce King of Scots*, Edinburgh, 1907.

³⁵ Douglas, A.A.H., *The Bruce by John Barbour*, Glasgow, 1964, pp. 14-15.

³⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 32.

³⁷ Hailes, *Annals*, volume 2, p. 4.

³⁸ Pinkerton, *Bruce*, I, pp. v-xvi.

that compilations of *The Bruce* over the previous two hundred years had been modernised to the extent that the “ancient poem” could not be judged. Thus, Pinkerton went back to the E manuscript and reproduced a printed version of it “with the utmost exactness”, observing that he worked from a copy of E, examined and attested as accurate in every detail by David Stewart, Earl of Buchan (founder of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries) in 1787. As noted above, he divided the poem into twenty books to ease the task of the reader, but without injuring “a particle of the text”. Repeatedly, Pinkerton emphasised his view of the literary quality of the poem, “the oldest monument of the Scottish language”. He compared it favourably with the “melancholy sublimity” of Dante and the “amorous quaintness” of Petrarch; and he proposed that the use of language was superior even to that of Gavin Douglas. Finally, he observed that Barbour owed no debt to Chaucer, drawing instead on the earlier tradition of medieval romances. This, he quickly added, did not mean that the content of the poem was romantic. Despite some “two or more fictitious incidents” (unspecified) in the first seven books, most of the remainder may be “evidenced from the best historians, English and Scottish”.

Some thirty years later, Jamieson³⁹ criticised Pinkerton’s work for its inaccuracies, admitted to him (he says) by the previous editor. He put this down to the fact that Pinkerton worked from a copy and not the original E manuscript. Jamieson described the etymological work he had undertaken for his edition and emphasised his recourse to the original manuscript. He proclaimed Barbour as historian as well as poet and gave a reasonable biography, in which he evinced great interest in the poet’s various pensions. Responding to Hailes’ suggestion that Barbour’s language had been modernised by a transcriber, he argues rather that Barbour himself might have attempted to “conform his language to the English, as far as he could do it, without rendering himself unintelligible to his countrymen”. It is difficult to judge whether this was the accepted method of the time or a device to

³⁹ Jamieson, *Bruce*, pp. viii-xxii.

maximise the potential audience. Coldwell⁴⁰ has a useful discussion of this, and other aspects of Barbour's use of language. Jamieson acknowledged the historical content of *The Bruce*, but made a particular point of emphasising its literary merit by a number of comparisons, and quotations from men of letters.

Ross⁴¹ (1884) noted the dearth of Scottish literature compared to England before the middle of the fourteenth century, and welcomed Barbour as "the father of the Anglic literature of Scotland". He set out his own, rather sympathetic, interpretation of King Robert's early years, and observed that there is a clear division between English and Scottish writers on the nature and substance of his kingship. Barbour's picture, said Ross, accords well with received Scottish wisdom about King Robert. Interestingly, he did not explore the possibility that Barbour's *Bruce* may be the source of such received wisdom. For Ross, "the work is unquestionably a poem as well as a chronicle", and he observed that poetic licence with history may be justified for artistic effect. He saw Barbour as "imbued with the spirit of genuine poetry in characterisation, description of events, and representation of circumstances". "*The Bruce*", he concluded, "is a poem, but not a fiction". Skeat's edition of 1894 represented a major advance in the presentation, analysis and accessibility of Barbour's *Bruce*. His contents pages gave a summary of the poem, and a detailed biography with references was set out in the preface. He gave an account of the surviving manuscripts, and of previously printed editions, appending a most detailed glossary and 75 pages of notes, mainly focusing on literary and linguistic matters, though also including some useful historical analysis⁴². Skeat was generally complimentary of Barbour's literary talents but implied his own, rather than the poet's, definition of "romance" when he observed that "we are hardly likely to read it in the light of exact history". He suggested that the highest tribute to the poetical merit of Barbour was that Sir Walter Scott admired it and borrowed from it

⁴⁰ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, especially pp. 192-204.

⁴¹ Ross, John M., *Scottish History and Literature to the Period of the Reformation*, Glasgow, 1884, pp. 42-58.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. lxii-lxvii.

extensively for his poem *The Lord of the Isles*, his novel *Castle Dangerous*, and his quasi-historical *Tales of a Grandfather*. Perhaps reflecting the nature of this last *oeuvre*, Skeat observed that Barbour was at his best in his picturesque and spirited anecdotes, where he was evidently bent on telling a good story.

In 1900, there was a brief but acerbic flyting about John Barbour's "othir werk". Neilson⁴³ categorised *The Bruce* in the "*chanson de geste*" tradition, and observed that Barbour was particularly well read, as evidenced by his numerous classical and other allusions. However, the main thrust of Neilson's pamphlet was the extensively argued claim that Barbour was also the author of a number of other works including *The Troy Book*, *Legends of the Saints*, and *Book of Alexander*. The argument included an analysis of word-usage and rhymes, as well as an impressive list of parallels between Barbour's description of Bannockburn and selected passages from *Alexander*. Responding almost immediately in a postscript to a book that was already in print when Neilson's pamphlet was published, Brown⁴⁴ rejected the possibility of Barbour's authorship of *Alexander*, suggesting instead that lines from the latter had been interpolated into *The Bruce* by a fifteenth century scribe. McDiarmid⁴⁵ has comprehensively dismissed all of Neilson's claims, essentially for stylistic and linguistic reasons, and has been supported in this by Duncan⁴⁶.

MacKenzie⁴⁷ (1907) critically examined sixteenth and seventeenth printed versions of the poem, as well as the methodologies of previous editors, and justified basing his edition on the C manuscript, collated throughout with the E manuscript. He made some orthographic changes to allow his version to be more easily readable, but otherwise made no language modifications. He saw a technical link with French metrical romance, but pointed out forcibly that Barbour's use of the description "romance" must not be misinterpreted⁴⁸: "no medieval writer would consider this

⁴³ Neilson, George, *John Barbour: Poet and Translator*, London, 1900, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Brown, J.T.T., *The Wallace and The Bruce Restudied*, Bonn, 1900.

⁴⁵ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, pp. 17-32.

⁴⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷ Mackenzie, *Bruce*, pp. v-xii.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

popular method of treatment incompatible with strict accuracy and reality of subject: that is a modern refinement". Otherwise, not surprisingly, MacKenzie's emphasis was on the historical aspects of the poem. He included an extensive glossary, but the historical notes were even more extensive, and appendix material on Bannockburn provided a radical theory about the site of the battle⁴⁹.

Eyre-Todd⁵⁰ (1909) considered John Barbour to be the father of Scottish poetry and *The Bruce* to be the earliest great poem in Scottish vernacular. Further, drawing a parallel with Chaucer's place in English literature, he claimed that the poem:

"....first defined and fixed the language of Scotland in the shape it was to keep as a literary vehicle for two hundred years, and it was Barbour's *Bruce* which definitely committed the poetry of Scotland to metre and rhyme, instead of the older alliteration and accent, as its distinguishing features".

Like MacKenzie, Eyre-Todd pointed to the chivalrous romances of France as a source of inspiration for Barbour, but he also regarded the "romance" as the poet's chosen vehicle for transmitting authentic history.

Henderson⁵¹ noted that Barbour had no Scottish poetic predecessor upon whose work to model his own; it was "an original venture in literature". Moreover, he claimed, Barbour was "for his time, a most correct, if not remarkably musical, metrist". This excessive praise continued later: "His tact is subtly perfect, his tone and temper beyond all praise"; and "as a political masterpiece it occupies an exceptional place in literature; and much of its effect is gained by the vein of noble sentiment that animates it". It is hardly surprising to find that Henderson cared little for the historicity of Barbour's *Bruce*, or that Ebin⁵² characterised Henderson's views as "a tiresome pastiche of previous critical remarks".

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 496.

⁵⁰ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. George Eyre-Todd, prose translation, Edinburgh, 1907, pp. v-xv.

⁵¹ Henderson, T.F., *Scottish Vernacular Literature: a Succinct History*, Edinburgh, 1910, pp. 46-49.

⁵² Ebin, Louise, *John Barbour's 'Bruce': Poetry, History, and Propaganda*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1969 Columbia University, p. 13.

A. M. MacKenzie's⁵³ review of John Barbour and his poem was as enthusiastic as Henderson's, but significantly more analytical. She acknowledged that "Barbour, indeed, as historians go, is honest," and observed that the term "romance" does not imply fiction; rather, "it is primarily a narrative about a hero". For MacKenzie, *The Bruce* was not folk-poetry in the sense of ballads, nor was it even strictly "literary". She compared the poem in purpose and nature with Buchan's *Montrose*, accessible but still useful to the serious scholar. She associated Barbour's narrative quality with that of Chaucer but emphasised the difference in purpose – that the latter set out to write fiction. In a perceptive insight, MacKenzie compared his portraits and set pieces to Dutch paintings – a wealth of content and context contained within a few deft flourishes of the artist. Indeed, she concluded, Barbour's extensive series of character sketches, both English and Scottish, lead us to a sense of the "deep human dignities" that pervade *The Bruce*.

In the last thirty years, a number of papers have assessed various aspects of the literary method, context and merit of Barbour's *Bruce*. Kinghorn⁵⁴ at once identified the poem as "a verse chronicle written in the spirit of noble romance". He emphasised that Barbour's purpose was to bring the experience of Scots into line with the wider classical and biblical experience⁵⁵. This, he said, gave *The Bruce* "a strong preaching tone", as Barbour condemns "political and social vices and extols their corresponding virtues". He contended that *The Bruce* is a romance "in the medieval sense of the word....a narrative of heroic action". Later, however, Kinghorn suggested⁵⁶ that the poem does not fit easily into any category "literary, historical, narrative, chronicle, aristocratic, clerical".

Other writers have explored, in some depth, particular aspects of Barbour's poem. Utz⁵⁷ analysed the meaning of "freedom", perhaps going beyond anything

⁵³ MacKenzie, Agnes Mure, *An Historical Survey of Scottish Literature*, London, 1933, pp. 41-55.

⁵⁴ Kinghorn, A.M., "Scottish historiography in the 14th century: a new introduction to Barbour's *Bruce*", *Studies in Scottish History*, 6 (1969), pp. 131-45.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.139.

⁵⁷ Utz, Hans, "If freedom fail: freedom in John Barbour's *Bruce*", *English Studies*, 59 (1969), pp. 151-65.

Barbour had in mind. Kliman⁵⁸ gave an interesting evaluation of the occurrence of named “commoners” in *The Bruce*, and suggested that their involvement gives an added dimension to Barbour’s notion of freedom. This is, she claimed, a significant milestone in literary history. In a later paper, the same writer⁵⁹ suggested that the words put into King Robert’s mouth by the poet are designed to portray a combination of wit and manliness. The combined effect of the various speeches throughout the poem map the development from the outlaw “King Hobbe” to the “Good King Robert”. Goldstein⁶⁰ made a more specific analysis of the use of ideology. Having observed that Barbour’s *Bruce* is “one of Scotland’s richest cultural treasures”, he went on to suggest that the poem was written with an explicit political purpose – preserving and renewing the significance of King Robert’s struggle for an independent Scottish state. For Goldstein, the struggle for freedom was more properly seen as a reaction to the English violations of Scottish property rights.

Schwend⁶¹ was comfortable with the idea of freedom as removal of English oppression, but saw much pragmatic religiosity in the poem. He noted that the Scots were compared with the Maccabees but, in his view, their leaders showed no more than basic piety throughout the poem. Schwend seemed to imply that this pragmatic approach to religion, as opposed to the strong and overt religiosity that might be expected of a clerical writer (and evidenced by Wyntoun, Fordun, the Monk of Malmesbury and others), tells us a great deal about John Barbour, the man. In passing, Schwend also observed that “Barbour called his book a ‘romance’”. This does not mean that Barbour intended to stress the element of fiction. Rather, argues

⁵⁸ Kliman, Bernice W., “The significance of Barbour’s naming of commoners”, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 11 (1973), pp. 108-113.

⁵⁹ Kliman, Bernice W., “Speech as a mirror of ‘sapientia’ and ‘fortitudo’ in Barbour’s *Bruce*”, *Medium Aevum*, 44 (1975), pp. 151-61.

⁶⁰ Goldstein, R. James, “‘Freedom is a noble thing’: the ideological project of John Barbour’s *Bruce*”, in Dietrich Strauss and Horst W. Dreschler (eds.), *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance*, 4th International Conference 1984 Proceedings, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, pp. 193-206.

⁶¹ Schwend, Joachim, “Religion and religiosity in *The Bruce*”, in Dietrich Strauss and Horst W. Dreschler (eds.), *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance*, 4th International Conference 1984 Proceedings, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, pp. 207-15.

Schwend, *The Bruce* is primarily a narrative about the great perils and adventures of Barbour's heroes.

McKim⁶², on the other hand, seemed to accept the later meaning of "romance" in a paper that made a not wholly plausible defence of the hypothesis that Barbour was influenced, inspired even, by Fordun. Of interest, however, to what comes later in this dissertation, is her emphasis on the importance Barbour placed on personal courage (as opposed to cowardice), resolute action (as opposed to indecision), and loyalty (as opposed to both treachery and treason). In a comparison of Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Hary's *Wallace*, Wilson⁶³ observed that characteristics of the type noted by McKim seemed to come quite naturally and spontaneously to Sir William Wallace, whereas their attainment represented a distinct trajectory of personal development for King Robert. Again, the relevance of this point will feature in analysis and discussion later in this dissertation.

Ebin⁶⁴ has applied a rather singular analysis to Barbour's *Bruce* and, while her points were valid departures in some cases and distinctly revisionary in others, the rationality of her work deserves some attention. She was quite clear that the poem is neither a chronicle written in the spirit of romance nor an epic lacking epic development⁶⁵. Instead, she saw it as "a carefully planned and positive narrative". She laid great emphasis on pace, episodes of varying length, transitional passages, and action climaxes. While much of this approach is the basic stuff of literary analysis, Ebin may have enthusiastically ascribed technique to Barbour that was not of his time or, more to the point, incompatible with his character as teased out above. However, she was surely on stronger ground when she implied, as she did throughout, that the poet was working to some firmly defined purpose⁶⁶. Perhaps it would be more

⁶² McKim, Anne M., "Gret price off chewalry': Barbour's debt to Fordun", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 24 (1989), pp. 7-29.

⁶³ Wilson, Grace C., "Barbour's Bruce and Hary's Wallace: complements, compensations and conventions", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 25 (1990), pp. 189-201.

⁶⁴ Ebin, Louise, "John Barbour's Bruce: poetry, history, and propaganda", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 9 (1972), pp. 218-42.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

reasonable to suggest that Barbour was working to a number of such purposes, closely linked perhaps, and certainly mutually supportive. It must be admitted, however, that Ebin firmly subordinated Barbour's historical authenticity to his singular (in her eyes) thematic purpose.

In many ways, the edition of McDiarmid and Stevenson⁶⁷ (1980-85) may be ranked with that of Skeat in terms of scholarship and analysis. Extensive notes, that seem to be aimed at complementing those of Skeat and MacKenzie, accompany a full glossary. There is a very full treatment of Barbour's sources and it seems that these editors are prepared to allow a substantial degree of historical authenticity to the poem, but clearly from a perspective of Barbour being an historian of his time. From the literary aspect, they saw *The Bruce* as a romance "only in the sense that (Barbour) himself gives to that term, it is a tale and its truth is marvellous". It is a heroic poem, they observed, even more than it is a chronicle where the poet interprets, selects and directs events rather than merely recounting them. Like McKim above, McDiarmid and Stevenson identified what they believed to be the strong themes running through the poem, but they gave a different set of characteristics: patriotism, nationalism (perhaps), freedom and leadership. They concluded their appreciation of the literary merits of the *Bruce* by observing that the poet "is too often content to rest upon the interest of his matter, and his factualness excludes the reader from a full understanding of what is being said, what is inflicted, suffered and achieved". In other words, McDiarmid and Stevenson criticised Barbour for concentrating too heavily on reporting what he and/or his sources believe to be true without the creative embellishment of rhetoric.

Duncan's⁶⁸ is the most recent edition (1997) of *The Bruce*, and may have already brought the poem a wider audience than all previous editions combined. As befits the editor, this latest version is strongly biased towards historical analysis, but Duncan clearly wishes to share with the reader the pleasure he takes from Barbour's

⁶⁷ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, pp. 45-51.

⁶⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*.

rhyme and metre. He is clear that *The Bruce* is an example of overlapping genres – *livre, istoire, roman*⁶⁹. Unlike Ebin above, Duncan emphasises the episodic nature of the poem, with each episode building on earlier examples or introducing a fresh idea⁷⁰. In particular, he notes the differing motivations at work within the two main characters. The King is identified with recovery of national freedom, Sir James Douglas (directly) with re-establishing the property rights of the landed class and (indirectly) with the stabilisation of social order⁷¹. Like Schwend, he observes the pragmatic nature of religiosity, even among the most senior churchmen⁷². Duncan's enthusiasm for the poem spills over on to nearly every page, yet he retains objectivity. Indeed, his opening statement to the reader may well illustrate his motivation in producing the edition (perhaps echoing Scott's sentiments in the Preface to "Tales of a Grandfather") and his overall ranking of the two principal perspectives on John Barbour's poem⁷³:

“I hope that you have bought this book to read one of the masterpieces of Scottish literature, and an important account of the history of Robert the Bruce”.

Barbour's Sources

Pinkerton did not speculate about Barbour's sources for historical material, but he did note in passing that Andrew of Wyntoun repeatedly quotes *The Bruce* in his own work⁷⁴. Deferring to Barbour, however, Wyntoun did not write about the 1306-29 period, instead referring his readers to *The Bruce*. Jamieson⁷⁵ is also incurious about Barbour's sources, though he notes the supposed existence of an even earlier historical poem by Peter Fenton, a monk of Melrose, written in 1369. He draws this information from the preface to another work, *The Famous History of the Renown'd*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷⁴ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. J. Pinkerton, London, 1790, pp. xxi-xxii.

⁷⁵ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. John Jamieson, Glasgow, 1869, p. xxvi,

and *Valiant Prince, Robert, surnamed the Bruce, King of Scotland*. This was written by Patrick Gordon and printed at Dort in 1615. It was apparently less complete than *The Bruce*, and has not survived. Neither Jamieson nor Gordon suggests any link between Fenton's work and Barbour's.

Mackenzie considers the question of sources though rather obliquely⁷⁶. He notes that Barbour used the oral evidence of active participators like Sir Alan Cathcart (Sir Edward Bruce's attack of fifty against 1500) and John Thomson (the Irish campaign). He believes that Barbour must have had access to the same contemporary writings that Sir Thomas Gray used in Edinburgh castle to write his *Scalacronica*. Agnes Mure Mackenzie⁷⁷ emphasises the existence of the different sources available to Barbour, and how he provided different versions of an incident when he found difficulty in deciding which was accurate.

McDiarmid also suggests that Barbour had access to a number of written sources including contemporary chronicles, church documents, and transcribed lays⁷⁸. He claims, though without convincing evidence, that Barbour "certainly knew and partially used the 1363 version of Fordun's *Gesta Annalia*", and that he drew heavily on this source for the first 274 lines of Book 1. As noted in Chapter 1, however, Broun has demonstrated that Fordun was almost certainly not the author of *Gesta*, though he also suggests that Andrew of Wyntoun and *Gesta Annalia* drew on a common source, perhaps located at St. Andrews, for the period 1285-1330⁷⁹. McDiarmid asserts that Barbour used family traditions (Douglas, Stewart, Keith) as well as oral sources (Bannockburn, Byland, Weardale). He notes specifically that written sources are strongly indicated by the precise date given for the battle of Loudoun Hill (Book 8, line 133), and for the taking of Edinburgh castle (Book 10, line 358).

⁷⁶ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. William Mackay Mackenzie, London, 1909, pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁷⁷ MacKenzie, Agnes Mure, *An Historical Survey of Scottish Literature to 1714*, 1933, London, p. 42.

⁷⁸ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, eds. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. Stevenson, Edinburgh 1980-85, 3 volumes (Scottish Text Society, 4th series, 12, 13, 15), pp. 38-44.

⁷⁹ Broun, Dauvit, "A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun", in Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 9-30.

Duncan⁸⁰ also seems happy to accept that Barbour used a mix of written and oral evidence, leaning heavily on accounts of the deeds of King Robert and Sir James Douglas, held within the Stewart and Douglas families respectively. He states specifically, but without much discussion, that Barbour did not use the accounts of Guisborough or *Flores Historiarum*. He notes the few parallels with Fordun's work, but argues strongly that for many events Barbour had other and better sources. He proposes Gib Harper as the minstrel source of the material on Sir Edward Bruce's exploits, but has little to say about sources for the earl of Moray. (However, a lost life of Moray has also been postulated,⁸¹ which may also have been available to Barbour.) Duncan also puts forward, tentatively, the notion of an Umfraville manuscript as the source of much detail about Sir Ingram in the poem.

It is not, of course, possible to be specific about Barbour's sources. The weight of opinion seems to accept written as well as oral sources. In addition, it must be at least possible that Barbour took the opportunity of his official trips furth of Scotland to gather information for his poem. In addition, a man in his position would have much freedom to travel around Scotland, seeking written sources and crosschecking oral contributions. Whether he used Fordun and/or *Scalacronica* as direct sources seems less likely than the view that all three used common sources. Similarly, there is little evidence or likelihood that Bower used Barbour as a source when writing the *Scotichronicon*. He gives full respect to Barbour as an historian (XII: 9, 20, 25), but almost always gives different weighting and perspective when writing about subjects covered in *The Bruce*. This suggests use of a different range of sources, in addition to those tapped by Barbour.

The question of Barbour borrowing directly from other works that exist to this day is most interesting, but perhaps not subject to complete resolution. In a definitive analysis, Gransden⁸² argues that works like *Lanercost*, *Vita Edwardi Secundi*,

⁸⁰ Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, ed. Archibald A.M. Duncan, original and prose translation, Edinburgh, 1997, pp. 14-30.

⁸¹ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, volume 7, p. xvii.

⁸² Gransden, Antonia, *Historical Writing in England ii: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, London, 1982, pp. 1-42.

Bridlington, and chronicles by Geoffrey le Baker and Trokelowe probably did not draw on one another, but on a broadly common group of sources that were selectively drawn on, perhaps limited by geographical considerations. In addition, it is clear that each writer had a differentiated perspective, e.g., Trokelowe was (relatively) more sympathetic towards the Scots, *Lanercost* had closer knowledge of northern affairs, *Vita* is more of an historiographical synthesis, le Baker made a point of seeking out first hand witnesses. By extending Gransden's argument, and by examining the internal evidence, it is very difficult indeed to build a case for Barbour's familiarity, or even sketchy knowledge, of these sources. The only possible exception is Grey's *Scalacronica*, which was written using sources available to him as a prisoner at Edinburgh castle (see Chapter 3 below). In a few cases, confined to incidents during the battle of Bannockburn, there are some parallels with Barbour, but the latter's perspective is always significantly different and he clearly has access to more detailed sources (or used them more meticulously).

The issue of Barbour and Fordun is, perhaps, more straightforward. As archdeacon of Aberdeen and chantry priest at Aberdeen respectively, they can hardly have been unaware of one another or of their respective historical works. *The Bruce* was written between 1370 and 1378 (see above), *Chronica Gens Scotorum* between 1371 and 1385⁸³. Fordun's own work went up to the death of David I in 1153. Thereafter, 'Fordun' was the work of an anonymous author, and this continuation has been termed *Gesta Annalia*⁸⁴. Boardman⁸⁵ has indicated the existence of another anonymous chronicler at work, perhaps from 1324 to 1390, some of whose work is closely reflected in Wyntoun's *Orygynal Cronykil*. It may be that Barbour used *Gesta Annalia* (Bower's most important source for the period) in the same way. Perhaps more likely is that both *Gesta* and Barbour used the 'St Andrews Chronicle',

⁸³ Lynch, Michael (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, Oxford, 2001, p. 303.

⁸⁴ Broun, Dauvit, "A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun", in Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 9-30.

⁸⁵ Boardman, Stephen, "Chronicle propaganda in fourteenth-century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the 'Anonymous Chronicle'", *Scottish Historical Review*, 76, 1997, pp. 23-43.

written there around 1363, as a common source⁸⁶. In the same way, Barbour, Fordun, Wyntoun, Bower and (perhaps) Grey may have consulted other sources, now lost completely. However, the difference in the approaches of Barbour and *Gesta* may be appreciated by comparing their versions of the Bruce/Comyn deal and the subsequent slaying of Comyn (see detailed analysis in Chapter 4). While the two versions tell much the same broad story, there are too many important differences in detail for one to be copied from the other, or even for both to have come from the same single source. Accordingly, it is not thought likely that the chronicle sources used for evaluation in Chapter 4 are mutually dependent to the point where they cannot be used to confirm one another. Indeed, the different weights they give to different elements of an episode suggest not only different perspectives, but different combinations of background sources. Thus, they may be used, cautiously and with constant regard for direct borrowing, to support one another where appropriate.

It should not be assumed that Barbour's use of oral evidence devalues his work in any way. At several points throughout the poem, he shows careful evaluation of oral evidence, e.g. when he gives an alternative account of how the king avoided the bloodhound⁸⁷. Some historiographers, for example Donaldson⁸⁸, discount oral evidence completely, though perhaps they too easily amalgamate the separate notions of tradition and oral evidence. Barbour was gathering oral evidence from men who had participated directly in the actions they were describing, or from their sons. Bannockburn and other events would be as freshly in the mind then as last week's cup final is today. Mapstone⁸⁹ observes how quickly Sir Gilbert Hay, one of the earliest readers of the *Scotichronicon*, contested wrong information Bower had given about himself (Hay) by correcting the author in a written marginal note. Indeed, he wanted the whole of Chapter 26 in Bower's final book rewritten because

⁸⁶ Broun, *Gesta Annalia*. See also Bower, *Scotichronicon*, volume 7, p. xvii.

⁸⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 261.

⁸⁸ Donaldson, Gordon, *Scotland's History: Approaches and Reflections*, ed. James Kirk, Edinburgh, 1995, pp. 15-28.

⁸⁹ Mapstone, Sally, "The *Scotichronicon*'s First Readers", in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 31-55.

it contained so many “errors”. Cowan relates a parallel situation⁹⁰ that confronted the Norse sagaman Sturla in 1263.

“Another problem may have been that as the members of Hakon’s expedition returned to Norway they provided Sturla with a superabundance of information. There was precedent for this. After the battle of Nissa in 1062 ‘there was a tremendous amount of talk and storytelling about the battle, for everyone who had taken part in it felt he had something worth telling about it’”

Even with tradition, it is rash to condemn too quickly. Olson has described in detail a case where a traditional ballad about the death of the “Bonny Earl of Murray” conveyed some historical truths more accurately over the centuries than did formal documents⁹¹. The Spanish *Poem of the Cid* was written over a hundred years after the events it depicts, and nearly two hundred years before *The Bruce*. Its hero is a Bruce-like figure, though not a king. Michael⁹² has noted that: “(It) exhibits a considerable haziness on some historical points and contains fictitious material, yet, unlike most medieval heroic poems, it contains much historic fact and some surprisingly accurate references to real personages. P.E. Russell⁹³ has suggested that: “The one explanation of the partial ‘historicity’ of the *Cantar* which seems to have escaped consideration is that it could be the product of a certain amount of historical investigation by its author”.

Political background to Barbour’s career and work

Until recently, historiography of the 1329-1390 period has been unremittingly negative about Robert Stewart, later Robert II. He has been portrayed as a shifty politician during the kingship of David II, and an unsatisfactory king between 1371

⁹⁰ Cowan, Edward J., “Norwegian Sunset – Scottish Dawn: Hakon IV and Alexander III”, in Norman H. Reid (ed.), *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III 1249-1286*, Edinburgh, 1990, pp. 106-107.

⁹¹ Olson, Ian A., “Just How Was the Bonny Earl of Moray Killed?”, in Edward J. Cowan (ed.), *The Ballad in Scottish History*, East Linton, 2000, pp. 36-53.

⁹² Michael, Ian, “Introduction”, *The Poem of the Cid*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 2.

⁹³ Russell, P.E., “Some problems of diplomatic in the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and their implications”, *Modern Language Review*, XLVII (1952), pp. 340-349, quoted by Ian Michael.

and 1390⁹⁴. Boardman has developed an interesting re-interpretation of the period that shows a much more determined (though not chivalric) character at work, determined to protect and expand his lands and rights, both before and after his coronation⁹⁵. He points out that too many historians of the period have taken Froissart's description⁹⁶ of Robert II as definitive. In elaborating an alternative view, Boardman suggests reasonably that the Scottish chroniclers who covered the period may have coloured their material according to the political influences that impacted on them and the political assumptions that they worked with⁹⁷.

This hypothesis is developed in a subsequent paper⁹⁸ that counterpoints Fordun's negative view of Robert Stewart with the more sympathetic perspective of the anonymous chronicler from whom Wyntoun drew for his *Orygynal Cronykil*. According to Boardman, while Fordun's work was published during the reign of Robert II, he collected his materials and formulated his views in the previous reign. This may explain his apparent bias towards David II and against Robert Stewart (Robert II). Similarly, the anonymous chronicler, working under the influence of the Stewart monarchy, showed appropriate sympathies. Despite the obvious geographical predispositions of the writers (Fordun north-east Scotland, anonymous south-west) Boardman identifies propaganda and counter-propaganda in the two chronicles. He concludes logically that historians must approach these sources with caution, especially when using them for the politically contentious period in question.

However, this is the very period when Barbour was collecting his materials and producing *The Bruce*, and it is sensible to examine whether Boardman's conclusions may also apply here. They cannot apply directly, of course, as his study compared Fordun against the anonymous chronicler. In the current analysis, Barbour is not being compared in the same way with other writers, though others will be used to

⁹⁴ See, for example, Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, pp. 123-204.

⁹⁵ Boardman, Stephen, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371-1406*, 1996.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

⁹⁸ Boardman, *Chronicle Propaganda*.

establish the level of historicity of *The Bruce* (see Chapter 3). Interestingly, Boardman suggests that Barbour gives a ‘politically correct’ account of the Bruce position in the Great Cause, similar to Robert II’s emphasis on the kingship passing through the male line in his provisions of 1371 and 1373⁹⁹. If Barbour was susceptible to political pressure or open to the suggestions of prevailing political environment, then these entail provisions would come at exactly the right time to influence him. Thus it may be helpful to enquire in more detail into the details of Barbour’s career in government service, as outlined in a previous section.

We first hear of this career when he achieved the ‘dignified and important function’ of auditor of the exchequer¹⁰⁰ in 1372, and by 1373 he is working as clerk of audit¹⁰¹ with the Chamberlain Walter of Biggar, John of Carrick, James Lindsay, Hugh Eglinton, William of Dalgarnock, John Gray and John Lyon. By 1375, he had dropped out of this group¹⁰², being replaced by David Bell. In 1377, he received a gift of £10 from Robert II, probably in consideration of the first part of *The Bruce*¹⁰³. Two years later, he obtained a lifetime pension of £1 per annum¹⁰⁴, assignable after his death¹⁰⁵, and there is a record of this being paid every year thereafter until he died in 1395, with the exceptions of 1380, 1383 and 1385. [After his death, this pension was paid, on average, seven years out of ten, to the Dean and chapter of Aberdeen cathedral from 1398 to 1499, beyond which there is no record of further payment¹⁰⁶.]

In 1382, it appears that John Barbour returned to government service, this time for a more prolonged period¹⁰⁷. The significance of this date is that on 4 November

⁹⁹ Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*, p. 58-59.

¹⁰⁰ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, volume 2, pp. civ, 385.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 428.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 469.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 566.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 597; vol. 3, pp. 25, 76, 102, 126, 142, 156, 185, 217, 233, 261, 306, 336, 360, 368.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 394-5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 422, 449, 480, 506, 530, 554, 579, 607, 640; vol. 4, pp. 32, 63, 94, 121-2, 154, 184, 259, 330-1, 397, 423, 457, 490, 520, 550, 586, 636; vol. 5, pp. 6, 46-7, 141, 197, 240, 283, 322, 403-4, 567, 638; vol. 6, pp. 41, 135, 319, 404, 509, 601; vol. 7, pp. 42, 221, 304, 377, 439, 519, 669; vol. 8, pp. 115, 205, 325, 400, 475, 558, 640; vol. 11, pp. 130, 241.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 84.

1382, James Lindsay murdered the Chamberlain John Lyon (they had served together with Barbour in 1373), and the King's second son Robert, earl of Fife, took his place.¹⁰⁸ It is tempting to assume and, in the absence of other evidence, sensible to conclude that Barbour was brought back specifically by Fife. He was paid £6.13s.4d. for services and expenses at audit in this year¹⁰⁹. He acted as clerk of audit until at least 1384¹¹⁰, and received gifts from the king of £10 in 1384, £5 in 1386, and £6.13s.4d. again in 1386¹¹¹. The grounds for these payments are not known, but it is reasonable to speculate that they were connected with his service as clerk of audit.

In 1389 Robert II made another payment of £10 from the customs of Aberdeen to John Barbour, repeated in 1390, 1392 and 1393¹¹², these last three being after the death of Robert II. Again, no reason is definitely known for these payments, but they may well signify the Stewart regime's pleasure and gratitude for Barbour's production of his lost epic on the history of the house of Stewart.

Bearing in mind the earlier discussion of Boardman's analysis of political influence and propaganda in fourteenth century chronicle writing, what can be made of Barbour's government career and the payments he received? The positions he had were prestigious and the payments substantial. Following Boardman's premise, it may be suggested that Barbour was seen as a safe pair of hands, and maybe even as a friend, by the Stewart regime. It is, however, more difficult to argue that his jobs and payments had a strong influence on his approach to *The Bruce*, as his entire information gathering and some of the writing were completed by the time he received his first appointment and payment. However, it would be most unwise to assume that there was no effect, and this point will be returned to at a number of points in the analyses of Chapters 4-7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. cxxv.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 661.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 663, 670.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 111, 675, 136 and 681.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 208, 223-4, 299 and 327.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed a range of contexts within which *The Bruce* was written. It will be readily seen that there is a degree of repetition in the views of scholars. The term "epic poem" may represent a broad consensus, but Duncan's notation of three overlapping genres of book, history and tale may be the most robust concept. There is certainly almost complete agreement that Barbour's use of the term "romance" is well removed from the present meaning of the term, and most literary commentators credit him at least with the effort to be "suthfast". Goldstein's perspective of *The Bruce* as a vehicle to project a political message about the renewal of national freedom comes closest to the central thesis of this dissertation, set out earlier in this chapter. It is a different, but not contradictory notion; indeed the two may well be regarded complementary, and may even have been so in Barbour's mind as he gathered his material and developed his project.

Barbour used a variety of written and oral sources. While some may also have been used by other chronicle writers, it is difficult to find evidence that suggests either that Barbour drew material directly from them, or they from him. Similarly, it is not probable that Barbour drew material directly from English chroniclers, though he may have used some of the same sources as Grey's *Scalacronica*.

The Bruce was written at a time of great political turbulence and shifting personal loyalties. It has been firmly suggested that Fordun and the anonymous chronicle drawn on by Wyntoun for this period had elements of propaganda in respect of David II and Robert II. While the same suggestion cannot be made clearly in the case of Barbour, his political connections may intimate that his work was not wholly unaffected. This point will be reconsidered during the analyses of Chapters 4-7; it will also feature in the following chapter's discussion of methodology.

Chapter 3

Historicity and Methodology

“Barbour's statements will stand the test of examination ¹.”

Historicity

The term “historicity” is widely used in historiography with two broad, and different meanings discussed below. The first appears to be specific to a few writers, and is included here for the sake of comprehensiveness. The second revolves around the use of the term as it appears in the title of this dissertation. The latter meaning will be considered at greater length and, lacking a generally agreed designation of any kind, a definition specific to the present work will be derived.

Stanford develops a restricted sense of historicity, building on the views of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Derrida (1930-) and Richard Rorty (1931 -). He views historicity as a matter of “reverberation in the public consciousness”², an awareness of our own place in history³. According to this view, historicity reflects the reality that all we do is bound to take place within limits of time and humanity⁴ and with an appreciation of living in history⁵ and being situated in particular circumstances. Stanford’s historicity implies that the characters in a history, its writer and its readers are all conscious of their particular places in the time line of the narrative, and may also be aware of the same past. Thus, we view the past from a distance of time, which gives different perspectives that may obscure or clarify. Accordingly, the meaning of an event may only be discerned by its relationship to other events; that is, the meaning of an event is not simply inherent in the event itself⁶. Further, the historical

¹ Maxwell, Sir Herbert E., *The Early Chronicles Relating to Scotland*, Glasgow, 1912, p. 240.

² Stanford, Michael, *A Companion to the Study of History*, Oxford, 1994, p. 7.

³ Stanford, Michael, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Oxford, 1998, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵ Stanford, *Companion*, p. 78.

⁶ Stanford, *Philosophy*, p. 197.

character's sense of historicity is an important factor in those actions that interest the historian⁷. Thus, historicity in this connotation implies an awareness of being situated in history and having some awareness of what that history comprises. It links both broad meanings of history, history-as-account and history-as-event⁸. Historicity also has important community influences, linked to the notion that knowledge of our own past helps to give a sense of self. Indeed, in the case of the present writer, what 'we Scots' accomplished, witnessed and endured in the past is largely determined by "formal history, myths, legends and folk-tales of all kinds"⁹. In developing this specific sense of historicity, Stanford calls Collingwood in evidence but, in reviewing the reference, it is clear that the latter focuses much more on history-as-knowledge¹⁰. This is closer to the historian's customary understanding of historicity, which we now assess.

Dictionary definitions of historicity are rather bald, but are clearly differentiated from Stanford, thus:

Historical authenticity; fact.¹¹

Of or pertaining to history or the record of past events.¹²

Historical actuality.¹³

Historical quality or character.¹⁴

Historical truth or authenticity.¹⁵

The historical genuineness of an event.¹⁶

An Internet search for historicity yields over 20,000 entries, a broad sample of which largely agrees with the simple definitions laid out above. No Internet entry could be found that resonated with Stanford's approach. Much of the material on the Internet is not of a professional historiographic quality, but there are some exceptions. Green's excellent paper focuses on the historicity of Arthur¹⁷, and

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁸ Stanford, *Companion*, p. 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Collingwood, R.G., *The Idea of History*, Oxford, 1946 and 1994, p. 227.

¹¹ "American Heritage" *Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edition, Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

¹² *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, MICRA, 1998.

¹³ *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, www.m-w.com.

¹⁴ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1973.

¹⁵ *Oxford Combined Dictionary of Current English and Modern English Usage*, 1982.

¹⁶ *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2002.

rigorously analyses the source evidence. He concludes that the evidence depends on two chronicle sources, neither of which can be seen as a reliable witness to history, with one being clearly derivative of the other. This conclusion broadly mirrors earlier studies on the same topic¹⁸.

An important aspect of historicity centres on a concern for what has really taken place¹⁹. Note, however, that a historical fact may only be regarded as “a judgement about the past in which historians agree”²⁰. Nevertheless, it is likely that, given the same set of sources, two independent historians would arrive at a different view of the facts²¹. Barzun and Graff identify the need in historical analysis to distinguish between true and false, probable and doubtful (or just impossible)²². To arrive at this point, the analyst must use a combination of “knowledge, skepticism, faith, common sense and intelligent guessing”. The decision must be rationally convincing to others as well as him/herself. Assessing probability is the most rational way of arriving at historical truth, expressed in a likelihood that the evidence quoted is “solid and veracious”²³; the numbers of signs that point to legitimacy are self-reinforcing and greatly increase the total probability. This last point is well understood, its genesis dating back to an extraordinary late 17th century mathematical treatment of historical evidence²⁴. Truth, therefore, rests on probability rather than possibility or plausibility. Implausible statements are those that do not fit with other evidence; they may be false or mistaken, but cannot be dismissed without analysis. Statements in evidence cannot ever be accepted as entirely true; even truthful chroniclers and document compilers can be mistaken, or may occasionally distort the truth. Thus, the analyst must use best judgement in arriving at the appropriate degree of probability,

¹⁷ Green, T., *The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur*, www.users.globalnet.co.uk/tomgreen/arthur.htm, 2001.

¹⁸ See, for example, Thomas, N., “Arthurian evidences: the historicity and historicisation of King Arthur”, *Durham University Journal*, 87(2), pp. 385-392.

¹⁹ Stanford, *Companion*, p. 111.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²¹ Marwick, Arthur, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language*, Basingstoke, 2001, p. 48.

²² Barzun, J. and Graff, H.F., *The Modern Researcher*, 4th edition, London, 1985, p. 109.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

²⁴ Craig, John, *Rules of Historical Evidence*, 1699, pp. 3-15.

perhaps using a scale such as “probably true, probably accurate, probably untrue, probably inaccurate”²⁵. Barzun and Graff conclude by noting that an objective judgement is one made by testing the analyst’s subjective impressions of the evidence so as to arrive at historical knowledge²⁶.

Shafer²⁷ provides a useful assessment process for historical evidence. Internal criticism of evidence should differentiate between literal and real meanings; it should ask whether the witness has the appropriate physical and social ability to observe and report; it should look at when and why observations were made; and it should evaluate distortion and clues to intended veracity. Corroboration involves comparing various portions of evidence, weighing its quality, while attempting to resolve contradictions. Evidence, no matter how strong, cannot deliver ultimate truth, it merely tends to prove or disprove²⁸. The apposite degree of corroboration depends on the nature of the problem and what evidence is available. Assessed reliability of corroborative witnesses is important in deciding what degree of authentication is necessary.

Many of the ideas above are subsumed within Marwick’s flow chart of the process of producing history. It may be summarised thus:

The past leaves sources, but also gives rise to myths; the historian applies expertise to the sources to (among other things) challenge the myths and produce contributions to knowledge of the past which together make up the bodies of knowledge known as history.²⁹

A definition of historicity set within the context of Marwick’s statement might include elements of a number of values: authenticity, genuineness, veracity, dependability, judgement, probability. It has the aspect of objectivity, though necessarily built on subjective assessments. It is a metric of sorts, with high and low values either on a continuous or an interval scale. It is part of the process of

²⁵ Shafer, R.J., *A Guide to Historical Method*, London, 1974, p. 41.

²⁶ Barzun and Graff, *Modern Researcher*, p. 184. See also Stanford, *Companion*, pp. 122, 124.

²⁷ Shafer, *Guide*, pp. 145-164.

²⁸ Stanford, *Philosophy*, p. 62.

²⁹ Derived from Marwick, *New Nature*, p. 37.

producing historical knowledge. Accordingly, historicity of evidence or source may be defined as follows.

Historicity comprises a judgment of probable authenticity, arriving at an objective evaluation, following subjective review, analysis and corroboration, and leading to the production of new or revised historical knowledge.

Methodology

As was clearly indicated in Chapter 1, many historians have made substantial use of material from *The Bruce* in general and specific histories, while observing some degree of caution about the historicity of Barbour's poem. Apart from Vāthjunker's unpublished PhD dissertation, however, there appears to have been no systematic analysis of the historical authenticity of John Barbour's work. Vāthjunker confined her attention to the part played by Sir James Douglas, and the analysis is carried out from an essentially negative perspective. This is signalled in the first sentence of the dissertation summary³⁰: "The thesis starts from the premise that John Barbour's 14th century epic poem *The Bruce*, long used by historians as a largely reliable source for events in the War of Independence, should be viewed primarily as literature and therefore potentially misleading where historical fact is concerned." Indeed, her whole attitude to the subject matter may well be characterised in the opening words of the dissertation³¹: "Douglas joined Bruce even before his coronation, *the king's hand presumably still dripping with the blood of John Comyn*". The purpose of this dissertation is not to right any balance subjectively tilted by Vāthjunker, but to carry out, as objectively as possible, an analysis of the historicity of Barbour's *Bruce*. One hypothesis explored in this dissertation is independent of the outcome of such analysis; it suggests that Barbour's purpose in writing his poem was to embed in the continuing Scots consciousness how military activity may be used to protect national freedom.

³⁰ Vāthjunker, *Sir James Douglas*, Summary.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.1 (my italics).

At this point, it may be useful to assess what Barbour and his contemporaries thought history was. It seems unlikely that most of the documents (now regarded as important source material) compiled by government agencies were regarded in any way as history or history-related by compilers or those who instructed them. However, as Longshanks's prosecution of the Great Cause showed, selective use of such documents was employed from time to time to support this or that "historical" claim of the king. In addition, the documents themselves are not free from inaccuracy; indeed, they are often "intractable, opaque and fragmentary"³². The chronicles were written more explicitly as a broadly continuous record of events and their inter-relationships, thus providing a helpful chronological framework³³. Monasteries often kept such chronicles, and *Lanercost*³⁴ is a good example. Some were commissioned by individual nobles or other dignitaries and usually compiled or co-ordinated by a named individual. *Scotichronicon*³⁵ and Barbour³⁶ fall into this category. Yet others may have been compiled by individuals who seem to have written for their own private purposes; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*³⁷, *Scalacronica*³⁸ and Le Bel³⁹ are examples of this. It is difficult to claim, and impossible to prove, that individual chroniclers set out to mislead their chosen audience or others. In this sense, there may be a propaganda element involved, which is evaluated in the discussion of bias at the end of this section. At this point, it is appropriate to identify the "tone" of the chronicles as they relate to the 1306-32 period. *Lanercost* is occasionally notably anti-Scottish, for example⁴⁰:

“Hardly had a period of six months passed since the Scots had bound themselves by the above-mentioned solemn oath of fidelity and subjection to the king of the English, when the reviving malice of that perfidious [race] excited their minds to fresh sedition.”

³² Marwick, A., *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language*, Basingstoke, 2001, pp. 156-7.

³³ Stanford, M., *A Companion to the Study of History*, Oxford, 1994, p. 143-4.

³⁴ *Chronicle of Lanercost 1272-1346*, translated by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Glasgow, 1913.

³⁵ Bower, Walter, *Scotichronicon*, 9 volumes, ed. D.E.R. Watt, Aberdeen, 1987-1998.

³⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*.

³⁷ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, translated by N. Denholm Young, London, 1957.

³⁸ Gray, Sir Thomas, *Scalacronica*, translated by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Glasgow, 1907.

³⁹ *Chronicle of Jehan Le Bel*, translated by W.J. Ashley, *Edward III and his Wars*, London, 1887.

⁴⁰ *Lanercost*, p. 163.

Scotichronicon can be anti-English, for example⁴¹:

“By stirring up strife as soon as he became a knight [Edward] had ... thrown the whole world into confusion by his wickedness, and shaken it with his cruelty. By his deceit he ... invaded Scotland and dishonestly subjugated the Scots and their Kingdom. [He] committed King John de Balliol and his son to prison, he destroyed churches, he put prelates in chains. He destroyed some by confining them in squalor, he killed the people and committed innumerable other evils.”

A more measured approach is evident in Barbour, Le Bel, *Scalacronica* and *Vita*. For example⁴²:

“During the dispute between the King and the said earl, Robert de Brus, who had already risen during the life of the King’s father, renewed his strength in Scotland, claiming authority over the land of Scotland, and subdued many of the lands in Scotland which were before subdued by and in submission to the King of England; and [this was] chiefly the result of bad government by the King’s officials, who administered them [the lands] too harshly in their private interests.”

Apart from a few occurrences in Barbour and *Scotichronicon*, there is little attempt made to give more than one perspective on any particular episode. In the broadest sense, therefore, we may recognise the chroniclers' efforts as a sort of proto-history, in that the linguistic root of the Greek word *historia* is *inquiry*. The chroniclers themselves would probably have argued that their work represented formal history as understood at the time, based on the use of such sources as were available and seemed appropriate.

In assessing the historical authenticity of *The Bruce*, we shall make use of Collingwood's distinction between the outside and inside of events⁴³. The outside event relates to everything about the event that can be described in physical terms: the slaying of John Comyn in Dumfries in February 1306, or the king reading to his followers during the crossing of Loch Lomond later in the same year. In contrast, the inside of an event may only be described in terms of thought: Robert Bruce's

⁴¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 14.

⁴² *Scalacronica*, p. 51.

⁴³ Collingwood, R. G., *The Idea of History*, revised edition, Oxford, 1993, p. 213.

motivation for the slaying of Comyn, or his concept of leadership in maintaining the morale of his followers. In addition, we will be concerned with two of Collingwood's rules of method⁴⁴: that all history must be consistent with itself; and that the historian's picture must stand "in a particular relationship to something called evidence". Thus, an historical statement may be described as 'true' if it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence. According to Collingwood⁴⁵, the whole perceptible world "is potentially and in principle evidence to the historian". Further, Cantor and Schneider⁴⁶ identify two kinds of historical proof. Demonstrable proof relates to specific problems that may be answered yes or no from a finite body of primary sources. Inferential proof is not absolute in this way; it is less logical and more intuitive. It depends for its validity in synthesising a number of facts into a consistent and coherent whole.

In evaluating John Barbour's historicity, then, we will concentrate on the outside of events and on demonstrable proof. In determining the poet's purpose, we will focus on the inside of events and deal with inferential proof.

Most of the evidence with which Barbour's material will be compared comes from six sources. The only truly contemporary source consists of official and quasi-official documents of the period. In 1884, Joseph Bain⁴⁷ produced his *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London* (CDS). Volume II and III covering the 1306-1332 period and, although historians have noted a number of cases where these documents have been misdated, CDS carries a substantial volume of good (if highly detailed) data. It is the main documentary source used here, though use is also made of (among others):

Acts of the Parliament of Scotland⁴⁸;
Exchequer Rolls of Scotland⁴⁹;

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴⁶ Cantor, N. F. and Schneider, R. I., *How to Study History*, Wheeling, Illinois, 1967, p. 177.

⁴⁷ Bain, Joseph (ed.), *Calendar of documents relating to Scotland*, volumes II and III, Edinburgh, 1884, 1887.

⁴⁸ Thomson, T. and Innes, C. (eds.), *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1814-1875, Volume 1.

⁴⁹ Burnett, G. (ed.), *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1884.

Foedera⁵⁰;
 Regesta Regum Scottorum⁵¹;
 Registrum Magni Sigilli⁵².

Chartularies of Scottish abbeys and other calendars and inventories of charters (see bibliography) have also been scrutinised for appropriate evidence. In the main these have yielded little direct evidence, though some tangential evidence will be intimated in Chapters 4-7 below.

*Vita Edwardi Secundi*⁵³ appears to have been written about 1325 by someone who lived in the west of England, but who had a great interest in Scottish matters. For English historians, it is a critically important (and sometimes sole) source for the actions of Piers Gaveston, the two Dispensers, and the English earls during the reign of Edward Caernarfon. With reference to Scotland, it is perhaps best known as a source for the battle of Bannockburn, but it also has many other useful snippets of information. *Vita* was, of course, originally written in Latin; Denholm-Young's translation is used here. It is not, strictly speaking, a chronicle. Tout⁵⁴ regarded it as: "...the most human, most coloured, and in some ways the most sympathetic and most critical of a not very strong series of chronicles". Gransden⁵⁵ adds: "Though it lacks the value of contemporaneity, subsequent research confirming its wise judgements and factual accuracy has added weight to the high regard in which Tout held it". *Vita*, therefore, will be regarded (subject to the general qualifications about chronicles noted below) as a generally reliable chronicle, accepting the reservations about chronicles previously noted.

An anonymous writer, perhaps at Lanercost Priory, compiled *The Chronicle of Lanercost*⁵⁶ in or after 1346, perhaps at the Minorite house of Carlisle. In either case,

⁵⁰ Rymer, T., (ed.), *Foedera, Conventionae, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, London, 1816-1869 (Record Commission), volumes I and II.

⁵¹ Duncan, A.A.M. (ed.), *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, volume V, Edinburgh, 1988.

⁵² Thomson, J. Maitland (ed.), *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum in Archivis Publicis Asservatum*, volume 1 (1306-1424), London, 1812.

⁵³ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, translated by N. Denholm Young, London, 1957.

⁵⁴ Tout, T.F., *The Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History*, Manchester, 1936, p.5.

⁵⁵ Gransden, Antonia, *Historical Writing in England ii: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, London, 1982, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Chronicle of Lanercost 1272-1346*, translated by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Glasgow, 1913.

the compiler was in a good geographical position to be well informed on matters on either side of the border. Indeed, he may well have been present at some important events. *Lanercost* was also originally compiled in Latin; here we use the 1913 translation of Sir Herbert Maxwell. According to Christison⁵⁷, *Lanercost* “purports to deal with the necessarily limited experience of one eye-witness who is nevertheless clear and convincing”. Though understandably biased against the Scots in some places, the chronicler’s knowledge of events is good, especially for the English north country and the borders, and his account is generally balanced and informative. Gransden observes that the Lanercost monk had an especial interest and knowledge of military affairs, though he also reveals humanity in, for example, his treatment of the death of Andrew Harcla⁵⁸. Apart from the noted bias, therefore, *Lanercost* will be regarded (subject to the general qualifications about chronicles noted below) as a generally reliable chronicle, accepting the reservations about chronicles previously noted.

Sir Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica*⁵⁹ was compiled around 1356 while the author was a prisoner of the Scots in Edinburgh castle. As well as drawing from the castle's apparently well-stocked library, Gray clearly used his father's direct experience of the English side during the 1306-1332 period especially, perhaps, in his account of Bannockburn where the Scots took prisoner Gray senior on the first day. It is likely that Gray wrote, at least in part, to record his own and his father's military deeds in their historic context. *Scalacronica* was originally written in Norman French. Here, we use the 1907 translation of Sir Herbert Maxwell, who had a high regard for Gray as a source because he was an experienced soldier and not, as were most medieval chroniclers, a churchman. Gransden recognises Gray as a soldier who could evaluate the relative merits of war and peace, though his outlook was basically chivalric⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ Christison, Philip, “Bannockburn – 23rd and 24th June 1314. A Study in Military History”, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 90, 1956-57, pp. 170-179.

⁵⁸ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Gray, Sir Thomas, *Scalacronica*, translated by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Glasgow, 1907.

⁶⁰ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 92-97.

Despite this, his writing is unbiased and regarded as generally trustworthy⁶¹. *Scalacronica*, therefore, will be regarded (subject to the general qualifications about chronicles noted below) as a generally reliable chronicle, accepting the reservations about chronicles previously noted.

Chronique de Johan le Bel was written, perhaps also around 1356, by a mercenary who accompanied Sir John of Hainault in support of Edward Windsor in the Weardale campaign against the Scots. *Le Bel* is an important source for Windsor's dealings with the Scots, and particularly for the Weardale campaign. Ashley's edition⁶², translated from the original Norman French, is used here. Brereton⁶³ regards *Le Bel* as an objective chronicle in its eyewitness accounts, and Duncan is clearly satisfied with his judgement⁶⁴. For the Weardale campaign, therefore *Le Bel* will be regarded (subject to the general qualifications about chronicles noted below) as a generally reliable chronicle, accepting the reservations about chronicles previously noted.

Finally, Bower's⁶⁵ *Scotichronicon* (1445), which included and extended Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scots' Nation* (1385), is an important source for this period. Some historians have charged Bower with inaccurate amending of elements of Fordun's original work. Watt's highly detailed translation and arrangement (1987-1998) details and assesses such changes, and this work is used here as a source for both Bower and Fordun. Volumes 6 (1991) and 7 (1996) cover the 1306-1332 period. Bower shared with Fordun a passion for the freedom of Scotland from domination by England. Where this informs his interpretation of events, it is usually easy to detect and discount. Bower was anxious to convey lessons of the past to (then) present and future rulers of Scotland, and used the range of sources (and perhaps more) available to Fordun, Barbour and Wyntoun. However, says Watt:

⁶¹ Mackenzie, William Mackay, *The Battle of Bannockburn*, Glasgow, 1913, p. 98.

⁶² Ashley, W. J., *Edward III and his Wars*, London, 1887.

⁶³ Froissart, *Chronicles*, Geoffrey Brereton (ed.), London, 1978, p. 13.

⁶⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 5, 16.

⁶⁵ Bower, Walter, *Scotichronicon*, 9 volumes, ed. D.E.R. Watt, Aberdeen, 1987-1998.

“.... such sources were only as good as their original authors made them; but we can have reasonable confidence that they were not late inventions by Bower from a prejudiced fifteenth-century viewpoint, but rather are the products of authors of earlier periods which Bower has in his usual almost mechanical way incorporated in his own composition”.⁶⁶

There are some additional cautions to be entered about reliance on *Scotichronicon* as a reliable witness. The possibility over both Fordun and Barbour being over-dependent on a common source (or sources) has been noted above. In addition, the concern about aspects of propaganda in Fordun, as well as Bower's somewhat prolix tendencies, have already been discussed. Overall, though, it seems reasonable to regard *Scotichronicon* (subject to the general qualifications about chronicles noted below) as a generally reliable chronicle, accepting the reservations about chronicles previously identified.

At this point, it should be noted that none of the six sources described above might be claimed to be wholly accurate or factual. This must apply to CDS as to the others though traditionally such documents are held in higher esteem than chronicles and other sources. Thus, the historicity of John Barbour's work may be assessed only in relation to other sources, and not as an absolute evaluation. Naturally, the same would apply to any of the six appraised against the remaining five plus Barbour.

In addition to the five chronicles described above, less frequent recourse will also be made to other English chronicles (Trokelowe, Guisborough, le Baker, Langtoft, Knighton, *Annales Paulini*, *Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan*) and Irish Annals (Clonmacnoise, Connacht, Inisfallen, Loch Cé, Ulster, Kingdom of Ireland). Taken together, all of these documentary and chronicle sources contain the great majority of all information accessed by historians of the period from Hailes onward.

In evaluating the historical validity of *The Bruce*, two further difficulties must be addressed: *what* to evaluate and *how* to do it. The poem could, of course, be evaluated line by line, seeking the provenance of every incident, person, place and time. Not only would this stretch the sources far beyond their total information

⁶⁶ *Scotichronicon*, D.E.R Watt (ed.), volume 9, p. 317.

content, it would yield a highly complex analysis that would be extremely difficult to integrate or form a unified explication. Instead, the approach adopted here is to consider historical authenticity at the level of *episodes*. Accordingly 119 episodes have been identified (see Appendix 2) from the narrative that, between them, account for about 95 percent of the text.

Two criteria have guided what constitutes an individual episode. First, due attention has been paid to the 150 “cantos” identified by Innes, and replicated by McDiarmid⁶⁷. These subdivisions correspond to new paragraphs in the Edinburgh and Cambridge manuscripts (see Chapter 2). These paragraphs appear to have been used to indicate the start of a new narrative line, or to pick up a previous one that is now to be followed. In many cases these paragraph indentations clearly delineate separate episodes. In some cases, however, they seem to break a natural episode into two parts. In these cases, the second criterion has been used. This is more subjective, but easily open to scrutiny. Where a natural episode has been broken up by these original paragraph marks, the episode has been synthesised from two (occasionally three) cantos. Occasionally an original canto, especially where it is unusually long (Bannockburn, the Irish campaign) has been divided into two or more episodes on the basis of the second criterion. Thus, the original cantos define 75 episodes, and the second criterion 44.

Turning now to how the evaluation of Barbour's historical authenticity may be accomplished, we recognise three inter-linked aspects. First is what may be termed the qualitative underpinning of erudition that may be best indicated in Collingwood's terms⁶⁸.

"Now, anyone who has read Vico, or even a second hand version of some of his ideas, must have known that the important question about any statement contained in a source is not whether it is true or false, but what it means."

⁶⁷ See Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, editions by Cosmo Innes (Aberdeen, 1856), and by Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1980-85).

⁶⁸ Collingwood, R. G. *The Idea of History*, revised edition, Oxford, 1993, p. 260.

Collingwood later expands this notion of the meaningful content of source material in a way that seems to have direct applicability to this dissertation⁶⁹.

"Confronted with a ready-made statement about the subject he is studying, the scientific historian never asks himself: 'Is this statement true or false?'; in other words: 'Shall I incorporate it in my history of that subject or not?'. The question he asks himself is: 'What does this statement mean?'; and this is not equivalent to the question: 'What did the person who wrote it mean by it?', although that is doubtless a question that the historian must ask, and must be able to answer."

The second part of the evaluation may be described as quantitative, and this is necessary so that we may more easily compare the assessed authenticity of the episodes reported by Barbour. Accordingly, bearing in mind the discussion in the previous section about plausibility, truth and probability, a simple rating system is proposed as follows.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Rating	Meaning	Interpretation
0	Not plausible	An uncorroborated episode that seems unlikely to yield any useful historical information
1	Plausible	An uncorroborated episode that fits the internal context of the poem or the external context of the times reasonably well, and may be used with extreme caution as a source of historical information.
2	Highly plausible	An uncorroborated episode that fits the internal context of the poem and the external context of the times reasonably well, and may be used cautiously as a source of historical information.
3	Weak support	An episode that is corroborated by one chronicle source
4	Support	An episode that is corroborated by a documentary source or two chronicle sources
5	Confirmation	An episode that is corroborated by a documentary source and one chronicle source, or by three chronicle sources.
6	Strong Confirmation	An episode that is corroborated by more than one documentary source, or by one documentary source and two chronicle sources, or by four chronicle sources

As noted earlier, evidence from CDS and other similar documents will be heavily weighted when they count for or against Barbour's authenticity; much more heavily weighted than, say, the chronicles. Evidence from different chronicles will be given equal weighting, apart from two broad exceptions. First, more attention may be paid to a chronicler who might be assumed to have rather more specialised knowledge of a specific subject (e.g. *Lanercost* in the case of events in the north of England, *Scalacronica* in the case of events in which the author's father participated or may have participated). Second, additional caution may be necessary in those cases where other researchers have previously detected evidence of transparent

propaganda (e.g. see discussion on Fordun in Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter; see also the discussion on truth below).

The value of an analysis of the historicity of *The Bruce*, or any other text, would be diminished by excessive correlation with any one of the sources used for corroboration. Where Barbour obviously shares a common source with documents or chronicles, this will exert a downward pressure on the rating of an episode. It should be noted in advance, though, that such instances are not easy to validate. Excessive divergence, especially where the compared sources were in broad agreement with each other, would also throw doubt on the efficacy of the analysis. While neither of these effects has been suggested in the literature, care will be taken in Chapters 4-7 to detect any signs of them that may be distinguished. This matter will be raised again in the concluding chapter.

It should be emphasised that *The Bruce* will be evaluated here for what it contains; no evaluative penalty will be applied for what it does not contain, for what is missed out by accident or design. Further, basic errors (like poor chronology) will not be penalised in every instance; rather, this kind of problem will be included in evaluation of the episode where it occurs, but not in associated episodes. It could, of course, be argued that missing material and/or poor chronology may have been explicitly driven by Barbour's perceived need to propagandise. This matter will be taken up in Chapter 10. Finally, here, there is the question of whether Barbour may have explicitly rewritten material he found in his sources to make specific historical, literary or political points. This is not a matter with which he has been particularly charged in the literature, but the suspicion may arise as a by-product of considering the explicit omission of material. The likelihood of such rewriting will be considered in detail (see Chapters 4-7 in those episodes where it is most likely to occur).

The third evaluative aspect is termed synthetic and is, effectively, the action of "qualitative" evaluation on "quantitative". It will be used where source evidence (whether for or against Barbour) is incomplete. In such cases, the congruence of

meaning between Barbour and other sources will be used to arrive at an overall evaluation of the authenticity of an episode.

A fourth evaluative mode will be used, and it is not linked to the three aspects described above. This mode is based on the breadth of Barbour's vocabulary as used in *The Bruce*, and the frequency of usage of particular words. If breadth and frequency were broadly similar, it would be reasonable to conclude that one person wrote the whole work. This would imply a relatively homogeneous integration of source material, as opposed to insertion of source material in its original form. In turn, it could be argued that this would support claims to "suthfastnes". As far as is known, this type of analysis of *The Bruce* has not been implemented in the past.

According to Lorenz⁷⁰, chronicles such as those identified above constitute claims of truth in that they refer to a real past and thus represent some level of knowledge of the past. The relative level of truth that may be claimed for any chronicler depends in part on supporting evidence from other sources (discussed above), and in part on the level of bias in any particular chronicle. History may be misleading by accident or as a result of bias. McCullagh⁷¹ has distinguished between cultural and personal bias. The first relates to situations: "...in which a historical influence, description, or explanation is later found to be untrue or unfair, relative to available evidence, because of a culture-wide interest in information of one kind rather than another". Thus, men in privileged positions, who were among the small proportion of literati, wrote all the historical documents and chronicles identified above. In addition, there are obvious cultural variations between government documents, Le Bel, Scottish chroniclers, and their English counterparts. Cultural bias may well be unavoidable in history because the compiler of each source was a product of his time and place, and had a self-evident interest in supporting the resultant culture.

⁷⁰ Lorenz, C., "Can histories be true? Narrativism, positivism, and the 'metaphorical turn'", *History and Theory*, 37 (3), pp. 309-329.

⁷¹ McCullagh, C. Behan, "Bias in historical description, interpretation, and explanation", *History and Theory*, 39 (1), pp. 39-66.

McCullagh⁷² also defines four types of personal bias in historical writing. First, a chronicler or other source compiler may misinterpret the evidence to hand, so that his inferences about the past are not justified. Second, the historical account may be unfair because it omits significant facts. Third, personal bias may arise from a general description of the past that implies facts which known evidence suggests are false. Fourth, bias may be seen in causal explanations of historical events that ignore some important causes. These failures may, of course, come about by accident. They are biased when the chronicler wants the outcome to reflect his interest or objective. One purpose of the analysis of episodes described above is to identify such sources and incidents of bias in Barbour's *Bruce* so that its historicity may be more accurately determined. We must, however, recognise that bias occurs in other sources and in secondary works. It may also be found in the present writing.

Implications of the methodology

The previous section set out an analytical methodology, as opposed to the more customary descriptive methodology used by historians. The terms “analytical” and “descriptive” are merely instruments used for the sake of this discussion; neither carries a pejorative nor positive connotation. Descriptive methodology has many advantages that have been used over the centuries, and particularly over the last fifty years, to tease out alternative interpretations from the same set of sources, based on different standpoints and perceptions. This has yielded much that is rich and insightful, and will continue to do so. Descriptive methodology, in the case of *The Bruce*, may identify the treatment of different events, the conduct of different personalities, the identification of perceived themes in the text, or the frequency and usage of literary devices. Such approaches develop much new knowledge, and open up many fresh themes for further research. Like any research methodology, however, the descriptive technique cannot offer a complete representation.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Accordingly, the analytical methodology described above is offered as a supplementary rather than an alternative to the descriptive mode. Its principal benefit as a means of assessing the historicity of *The Bruce* is that it allows clear and direct comparison between different episodes in the poem, and it permits (as will be shown in Chapter 11) a more integrated and homogenous synthesis. It is weak where the descriptive methodology is strong (richness, alternative interpretations, themes etc.), but complements it powerfully. However, it also allows other researchers a more direct way of comparing their analyses of the episodes in *The Bruce* with those reported in Chapters 4-7, identifying their own “ratings”, and arriving at well-supported alternative conclusions.

Summary

As indicated, the central purpose of the dissertation is to carry out a systematic evaluation of the historicity of Barbour’s *Bruce*. The alternative meanings of historicity have been discussed and a working definition constructed. Evaluation will be done by appraising episodes in the poem against other sources, assessing the potential historicity of Barbour-specific episodes, exploring the authorship of *The Bruce*, reviewing the importance of the poem as a source for the 1306-29 period, and reflecting on the basic purpose of the author(s). The methodology for the various analyses and evaluations has been explained.

Chapter 4

The beginning to the battle of Glentool

“Barbour mentions that Bruce had a foster-brother whose death he laments¹.”

In Chapters 4-7 the 119 episodes defined in the previous chapter will be evaluated for historical reliability according to the previously developed scale, which is now set out below as a reminder. No conclusions will be set out for Chapters 4-6; instead, there will be a discussion at the end of Chapter 7 that applies to all four.

Rating	Meaning	Interpretation
0	Not plausible	An uncorroborated episode that seems unlikely to yield and useful historical information
1	Plausible	An uncorroborated episode that fits the internal context of the poem or the external context of the times reasonably well, and may be used with extreme caution as a source of historical information.
2	Highly plausible	An uncorroborated episode that fits the internal context of the poem and the external context of the times reasonably well, and may be used cautiously as a source of historical information.
3	Weak support	An episode that is corroborated by one chronicle source
4	Support	An episode that is corroborated by a documentary source or two chronicle sources
5	Confirmation	An episode that is corroborated by a documentary source and one chronicle source, or by three chronicle sources.
6	Strong Confirmation	An episode that is corroborated by more than one documentary source, or by one documentary source and two chronicle sources, or by four chronicle sources

¹ Nicholson, Ranald, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, 1978, p. 73.

Episode 1.1: The Great Cause (37-178)

Not for the last time, we can see in this episode that Barbour's grasp of detailed chronology is not his strongest attribute, though the Guardianship did last for six years². However, as a summary of a highly complex case, Barbour's description seems adequate³, though predisposed toward the Bruce case⁴, and it is clear that the Competitor and John Balliol were the two main contenders because of their descent from David, earl of Huntingdon (brother of King William the Lion)⁵. The good relationship between the kingdoms up to the time of the Great Cause may be illustrated by the official correspondence between the courts⁶ and in particular, the personal exchange between the kings following the death of Prince Alexander in 1284⁷. Duncan⁸ accepts that Barbour is "essentially" correct here. Longshanks was unrelenting in his treatment of the Welsh⁹, though his interest in Ireland seemed to be confined to resource exploitation to fight his Welsh and Scottish wars¹⁰. Longshanks was in Gascony, not in the Holy Land, when he received the Scots' plea for judgement¹¹ (Grey mistakenly indicates Ghent¹²). Barrow, however, emphasises that there is no documentary evidence of a formal invitation to Longshanks to become involved¹³. The Scots met at Longshanks's request¹⁴, and Bower confirms his offer to the Competitor and Balliol¹⁵. The latter's unsuccessful kingship and ultimate failure are well attested¹⁶.

² *Lanercost*, p. 43.

³ Stones, *Relations*, documents 14-24.

⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 48n.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62; *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 9, p. 29.

⁶ CDS II: 140, 150, 154, 155, 156, 159, 204, 215, 233, 241, 250, 252, 253, 267, 272.

⁷ Stones, *Relations*, pp. 42-43.

⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 50n.

⁹ *Scotichronicon*, V, pp. 413-415.

¹⁰ Duffy, S., *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, pp. 128-433.

¹¹ *Lanercost*, p. 55; *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 11.

¹² *Scalacronica*, p. 8.

¹³ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ *Scotichronicon* VI, p. 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 31.

¹⁶ Stones, *Relations*, pp. 63-76, 79-80; CDS: II: pp. 654, 656, 657, 658, 660, 668, 680, 683, 685, 687, 688, 695, 714, 722, 736, 737, 742-803, 821, 829, 840, 887; *Scalacronica*, p. 13.

It should be noted in passing that Barbour mistakenly assigns the earldom of Carrick to the Competitor (line 67), whereas it came into the Bruce family by the marriage of his son. This, together with an observation that will be dealt with in Episode 1.4 below, has been conflated by some historians as an error that discredits Barbour's authenticity¹⁷. Also, Duncan¹⁸ decries (without offering evidence) the offer by Longshanks to the Competitor and Balliol as "certainly untrue". He is right in that there is no documentary evidence, but he may be assuming that Barbour reported this as a formal offer, or part of the formal negotiation. In a summary such as Barbour's, it would seem more likely that such a report of informal discussion would be included to indicate the spirit in which he believed the Great Cause was pursued. Finally, it is clear that Barbour misses much important detail of the Great Cause, but this is consistent with his overall purpose (see Chapter 8).

If we accept the summary nature of Episode 1.1, then it is evident that it is supported at key points by documentary and chronicle evidence, notwithstanding the two obvious errors and the loose chronology. It seems appropriate, then, to classify it as supported, with a rating of 4.

Episode 1.2: Longshank's occupation of Scotland (179-224)

As with the previous episode, this appears to be Barbour's brief summary of the 1296-1305 period. Grey notes specifically that Longshanks occupied all the castles of Scotland and appointed his own officials to run the country¹⁹; he also reports on the destruction of St. Andrews²⁰. Duncan²¹ finds it difficult, in the absence of specific documentary evidence, to give credence to English occupation of castles in 1296, though Watson²² quotes documentary evidence for substantial castle garrisons from 1298 to 1303. Bain²³ gives details of castle garrisons and officials appointed:

¹⁷ See, for example, Maxwell, *Bruce*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 54n.

¹⁹ *Scalacronica*, pp. 17, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 54n.

²² Watson, F., *Under the Hammer*, East Linton, 1998, pp. 70-74.

²³ CDS II: 853.

Roxburgh, Ayr, Berwick, Jedburgh, Selkirk Forest, Elgin, Forres, Stirling, Yester, Wigton, Cruggleton, Buittle, Kirkintilloch, Edinburgh, Dunbarton. The same notice also identifies escheators north and south of the Forth, officials in Galloway, Argyll, Linlithgow, Haddington, as well as the Treasurer of Scotland (Hugh de Cressingham) and delivery of Scottish writs (William de Bevercote). Earl Warenne was the Keeper of the realm and lord of Scotland, followed by Sir Brian fitz Alan²⁴. There is also documentary evidence for mistreatment of knights and removal of normal freedoms²⁵, but lands and properties were also restored for co-operative behaviour²⁶. Duncan²⁷ suggests that, despite Grey's evidence, talk of indiscriminate hangings may be propaganda. *Lanercost* states that Longshanks issued orders forbidding plunder and destruction to his troops in Scotland²⁸, and reports atrocities of Scots against English²⁹.

The documentary evidence strongly suggests that much of the activity was what might be expected in a bitter war of occupation. Grey and *Lanercost* give the English version, Barbour and Bower³⁰ the Scottish. While some of the detail in this evidence supports Barbour, it cannot be said to support wholly the meaning of Episode 2.1, which is therefore classified as supported, with a rating of 4.

Episode 1.3: Early history of James Douglas (275-444)

Sir William Douglas was indeed treated harshly and died in the Tower of London before 20 January 1298-99³¹. There is no evidence that Clifford or anyone else held the Douglas lands from Longshanks, but Barbour is internally consistent in referring to this again twice in Book 2, twice in Book 5 and in Book 8. Certainly, Longshanks had stripped William of his manor at Fawdon by 24 November 1298 and given it to

²⁴ *Ibid.* II: 871, 935-936.

²⁵ *Ibid.* II: 939, 940, 944, 948.

²⁶ *Ibid.* II: 952, 963.

²⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 54*n*.

²⁸ *Lanercost*, pp. 149-150.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

³⁰ *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp. 59, 133-173, 187, 291-303.

³¹ *Scots Peerage*, volume 3, pp. 138-140; CDS II, 957, 960, 1054, 1055.

the earl of Angus³². Also, the notion that Clifford was rewarded for loyalty and Sir William Douglas stripped of his land for perceived disloyalty is consistent with what we know of Longshanks's characteristics³³. Duncan³⁴ concurs with this inference. He³⁵ also notes that James Douglas would be not younger than nine when his father died in 1297. The only other reference³⁶ to James's Paris sojourn comes from Hary's *Wallace*, a source that historians traditionally suspect, though there is no reason at all why Hary should exaggerate or mislead in this case. Presumably, William Douglas made some attempt to gain his lands before the young James was sent overseas for safety/education. If the latter left Scotland in 1299 and returned in 1302 still disinherited, he would no doubt look for a position in the establishment of a magnate. William Lamberton would fit the bill perfectly, though there is no evidence for this. Duncan³⁷ suggests that Douglas may have accompanied Lamberton to Paris³⁸ in the embassy of 1301-02. It is equally likely that James met the bishop in Paris during the course of this embassy and returned to Scotland under his protection, thus increasing the likelihood of the bishop's household as a place of employment. It is unlikely that James Douglas would be able immediately to persuade anyone, including bishop Lamberton, to represent his case to Longshanks, so 1303 may be the earliest this could be done. Longshanks³⁹ passed through Stirling on 8 October 1301, again on 10 June 1303, and for a third time from 28 October - 2 November 1303. He was there again on 12-13 April 1304. None of these is a long enough stay for Lamberton to hear of his presence, journey to Stirling, and make a plea. However, Longshanks stopped at Stirling for an extended visit, 24 April - 13 August 1304, and did not return again before his death. This would be two years after James Douglas's return to Scotland. He would also be sixteen by this time, a

³² CDS II: 1030.

³³ *Ibid.* II: 950.

³⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 60n.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60n.

³⁶ McDiarmid, M.P., *Hary's 'Wallace'*, Edinburgh, 1969, volume 2, p. 27.

³⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 62n.

³⁸ CDS II: 1301.

³⁹ *Itinerary of Edward I*, volume 2, pp. 206, 226, 230, 236-240.

suitable age to be claiming his inheritance. Vāthjunker⁴⁰ is almost wholly sceptical of this version of James Douglas's early history, mainly because Barbour and Hary are the only direct sources. She does, however, accept the possibility that Hary correctly reported Douglas's stay in Paris, that Douglas approached Longshanks for the return of his lands, and that he was refused.

There is no documentary or chronicle evidence for the main thrust of this episode, though it fits well with the poem's internal context and the external context of the times. Normally, then, it would be rated as 2 (highly plausible). Notwithstanding Vāthjunker's caution, there is a considerable degree of documentary evidence for some of the peripheral aspects of Barbour's account. Accordingly, it may be regarded as weakly supported (rating of 3).

Episode 1.4: The Bruce/Comyn deal (477-514)

Before considering the evidence for this episode, we must first look at the meaning of the line (Book I, line 477) that reads: "The lord Bruce, of whom I spoke before". An understanding of this line depends on an appreciation of Barbour's structure. In lines 1 to 36 he introduces the subject of the poem and its chief characters, King Robert (line 27) and Sir James Douglas (line 29). He then puts the poem in historical context by means of a prologue that is also, in effect, a parenthesis stretching from line 37 to line 476. Thus line 477 refers to the Bruce of line 27 (namely, the king), not to that of lines 67 and 153. This eliminates one of the great inaccuracies of which Barbour often stands accused.

Bower and Grey also discuss Episode 1.4. The former confirms the detail of Stirling⁴¹ and the concern for Scotland, but has Bruce propose the deal and Comyn accept it. He also confirms the indentures and oaths. Bower also indicates awareness of a second version of the deal, where Comyn is the proposer and Bruce the

⁴⁰ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral dissertation*, pp. 25-33.

⁴¹ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp. 303-304.

acceptor⁴². According to Grey⁴³, Bruce proposed the deal some two years later in the Greyfriars church at Dumfries. Comyn refused it on the basis of loyalty to his "English seigneur". Wyntoun's version⁴⁴ confirms the details of Barbour's.

What are we to make of the conflicts in evidence outlined above? Unless we adopt the position (rejected in Chapter 3) that only documentary evidence is "factual" and all else is worthless, it is difficult to agree with Barrow's classification⁴⁵ of a "romantic story". Nor need we accept Duncan's interpretation that the episode has been concocted to portray Comyn negatively⁴⁶. Indeed, as he himself points out, Bruce the Competitor had made a similar offer to Count Florence of Holland during the Great Cause in 1292⁴⁷. Duncan⁴⁸ also states that the existence of a treasonable indenture is "so improbable as to be ludicrous". Perhaps, but so is the alternative – that either Bruce or Comyn would commit himself to such an extraordinary undertaking without some form of written agreement. In addition, it is far from certain that either would have regarded such an agreement as treasonable in the full sense of the word, though it may be accepted that Longshanks would take a different view. Perhaps perversely, Duncan suggests that an indenture was indeed possible, witnessing that between Bruce and William Lambert on at Cambuskenneth on 11 June 1304, during the siege of Stirling castle⁴⁹. Longshanks was in attendance at the siege on that day⁵⁰ and, when the agreement came to his notice at a later date, did indeed regard it as treasonable. If Bruce and Lambert felt able to produce such an indenture, there can be no reason to deny that Bruce and Comyn would repeat the exercise. Indeed, Duncan⁵¹ concludes his discussion: "It is likely that Bruce and Comyn made a similar indenture a month or so later".

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 309.

⁴³ *Scalacronica*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁴ Wyntoun, Andrew, *Original Chronicle*, pp. 353-355.

⁴⁵ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 139.

⁴⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 70n.

⁴⁷ Stevenson, *Documents*, I, p. 255.

⁴⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 70n.

⁴⁹ CDS II: 1817.

⁵⁰ *Itinerary of Edward I*, p. 238.

⁵¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 71n.

The basic premise of a proposed deal between Bruce and Comyn is common to all four versions, that it was made on the road from Stirling and sealed with indentures and oaths is common to three versions; two versions suggest Bruce as the proposer, two Comyn. There is more agreement with Barbour than disagreement. Finally, the "meaning" of the incident, that it was the occasion of subsequent disagreement between the principles, is common to all versions. Documentary support exists for some of the peripheral details of Barbour's report. In classifying Episode 1.4 as "supported", with a rating of 4, we seem to be agreeing with Nicholson's verdict⁵² that "it is possible".

Episode 1.5: Deal revealed to Longshanks (561-630: II 1-24, 46-69)

This is a highly circumstantial account, and it seems likely that Barbour had a written source for it. The account itself has found little favour with historians. MacKenzie⁵³ suggests that the indenture was confused with the better-attested Bruce-Lamberton document of 1304. Both Duncan⁵⁴ and Barrow⁵⁵ wish to dismiss the account on the basis that there was no parliament held by Longshanks at this time, and the latter points out that there is no evidence that Bruce was with Longshanks a few weeks before the death of Comyn. There is, of course, no evidence of any kind to support MacKenzie's suggestion and Barrow, presumably, wished to confine himself to documentary evidence on this occasion, for Wyntoun and Bower (as we shall see below) support Barbour on this point. In addition, there is absolutely no evidence of any kind to suggest that Bruce was not with Longshanks at this time. Finally, it is perhaps appropriate to take issue with Duncan and Barrow for their assumption that Barbour's use of the word "parliament" conforms to their strict and legalistic interpretation. Barbour may simply have meant a meeting of close advisers, and he does say that it was called "hastily" (Book I, line 591). In fact,

⁵² Nicholson, *The Later Middle Ages*, p. 71.

⁵³ MacKenzie, W.M., *The Bruce*, p. 387.

⁵⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 74.

⁵⁵ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 140.

just below, Barbour may be said to make his meaning clear, calling the meeting a "privy council" at line 603, and again a "plenary council" at line 624. Such councils, of course, would require much less notice than a formal parliament and could thus be called "hastily".

Wyntoun⁵⁶ effectively confirms all the details of Barbour's account up to the escape from London; and it is possible that he was using the same source. It is, perhaps, less likely that he merely copied from *The Bruce*, as details of the escape sequence are significantly different to Barbour. According to Grey⁵⁷, Bruce charged Comyn with betraying him to Longshanks by letter, but makes no reference to the matter of Episode 1.5. Bower⁵⁸ agrees that Comyn's initial betrayal of Bruce was by "messengers and private letters", but in the same passage seems to suggest that Comyn showed the indenture to Longshanks and pressed in person the case against Bruce. However, a second version given by Bower effectively confirms that of Barbour⁵⁹ up to the point of escape. The partial correlation between Barbour, Wyntoun and Bower's second version on the one hand, and between Wyntoun and Bower's first version on the other, suggests that there were two quite separate earlier sources for all three chronicles to draw on. Barbour's account, therefore, may be classified as supported and rated 4. This is broadly in accord with the treatment of the incident by Young⁶⁰, though McNamee⁶¹ and Nicholson⁶² wholly ignore it.

Episode 2.1: The slaying of John Comyn (25-48)

This is a brief, though famous, passage. Some elements appear to have been misinterpreted by many historians, some not interpreted at all. First, we must consider the popularly used terminology. Virtually without exception, historians apply the word "murder" to this incident. Among modern historians, it takes a

⁵⁶ Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle*, pp. 355-365.

⁵⁷ *Scalacronica*, p.30.

⁵⁸ *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 305.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁶⁰ Young, Alan, *The Comyns, 1212-1314*, 1997, pp. 197-98.

⁶¹ McNamee, Colm, *Wars of the Bruces*, 1997, p. 28.

⁶² Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 71.

French source to abstain from the term⁶³. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, murder is "the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought". Even the astonishingly anglophilic Tout confined himself to: "...Comyn was slain"⁶⁴. Whatever the thoughts or motivations of either man beforehand, it is clear that each willingly accepted a place of sanctuary for the meeting and, within in it, the high altar, the most sacred spot available. Given the religious tenor of the times, which is attested to time and time again throughout the sources, it is wholly inconceivable that either man attended the meeting with sufficient malice aforethought to contemplate actively a sacrilegious homicide. Indeed, given that the meeting had been determined, the principals had selected the locus in Dumfries that minimised the risk of such an outcome. To those who doubt the cogency of this scenario, we need only point to the subsequent general revulsion (and, indeed, Bruce's own lifelong guilt and eventual contrition) for validation.

Second, practically no attention has been paid to Barbour's motivation for including this episode in the poem. He is generally accused (see Chapter 10) of producing a partisan history to pander to the antecedents of King Robert II. Yet here we have Barbour freely observing that there are other versions, some of which must have been significantly more sympathetic to Robert Bruce, but insisting on including a critical (and perhaps objective) account of his principal character's most heinous deed. In addition, he emphasises that, even if other versions are true, the deed was as wrong as anything could be. It seems, then, that the common interpretation of this episode may only be arrived at by ignoring the arguments set out above and accepting at face value statements from English sources which, to say the least, contain a significant propaganda element.

Wyntoun is fully supportive of Barbour's version up to the slaying of Comyn, perhaps again indicating a common source. Bower⁶⁵ notes that, on the day before he

⁶³ Duchien, Michiel, *Histoire de l'Ecosse*, Paris, 1998, p. 108.

⁶⁴ Tout, T.F., *Edward the First*, London, 1893, p. 226.

⁶⁵ *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp. 311- 313.

reached Lochmaben, Bruce met a Comyn messenger carrying letters to Longshanks urging the execution of Bruce. He took these letters, produced them to Comyn at the high altar of the Friars Kirk in Dumfries, and wounded Comyn. Some friars carried Comyn behind the altar, where he was subsequently dispatched by two of Bruce's followers. Sir Robert Comyn (a correction on Barbour's Sir Edmund) was also killed. Bower recalls the forecast of vengeance on Bruce's followers for the killing of John Comyn, but this may be merely an attempt to shift guilt away from Bruce. *Flores Historiarum*⁶⁶ and Knighton⁶⁷ report the homicide at the church of the friars minor in Dumfries. Langtoft⁶⁸ agrees with the location, suggests that the quarrel was because Comyn refused to wage war with Bruce against Longshanks, and adds the interesting detail that Bruce was leaning upon the altar when he dispatched Comyn. *Lanercost*⁶⁹ observes that Bruce "seditiously and treacherously" sent for Comyn to meet him in the Dumfries church, where he slew him and Sir Robert Comyn. Grey⁷⁰ adds to this basic account that Bruce sent his two brothers, Thomas and Neil, to collect Comyn and kill him on the way. Owing to his kind behaviour, they were unable to do so, and Bruce decided to "settle with him". At the high altar of the Friars church he offered Comyn the deal outlined in Episode 1.4, and struck him down with a dagger when he refused. Comyn's uncle (unidentified) struck Bruce on the breast with a sword, but his armour saved him. The uncle was slain immediately. Guisborough⁷¹ also writes of Thomas and Nigel (Neil) Bruce escorting Comyn to the Dumfries church, where Bruce accused him of treachery and "struck him with foot and sword". Bruce's followers dispatched Comyn and left him at the altar. Christopher Seton killed Robert Comyn. The notable part of this account is that Guisborough explicitly accused Bruce of conspiracy. The documentary evidence⁷² shows an interesting progression in the news arriving at the English court. On 23

⁶⁶ *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H.R. Luard, Rolls Series 95 (volume 3), 1890.

⁶⁷ *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ed. J.R. Lumby, volume 1, London, 1889, p. 404.

⁶⁸ *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. Thomas Wright, volume 2, London, 1868, pp. 366-7.

⁶⁹ *Lanercost*, p. 176.

⁷⁰ *Scalacronica*, pp. 29-30.

⁷¹ Duncan, *Scottish Independence*, p. 31, (Duncan's translation).

⁷² CDS II: 1746, 1747.

February Longshanks notes "the late John Comyn of Badenaghe", but by the next day he is writing of the murder of John Comyn and his uncle Robert "by some people who are doing their utmost to trouble the peace and quiet of the realm of Scotland". By 5 April, he is writing⁷³ of the rebellion of Bruce "who has betrayed his confidence and murdered his liege John Comyn of Badenagh", and two days later he is calling for action against "anyone who was at or privy to the murder of John Comyn". On 10 April⁷⁴, he is escheating Bruce's lands "for his felony in seditiously and treacherously slaying John Comyn of Badenaghe before the High Altar of the church of Friars Minors of Dumfries, and thus committing sacrilege". This charge was repeated on 26 May, by which time the English version of the propaganda had been fully developed. The increasing emotiveness of these charges may be usefully compared⁷⁵ with the measured language summarising the Pope's bull of 1320 proclaiming "Robert de Brus excommunicated for the death of John Comyn".

This episode has been explored in great detail as it illustrates how emotion and propaganda were quickly built into the versions of the two sides. Barbour's is the least open to this charge, and he appears to be the only source to attempt a balanced account. This, of course, does not necessarily reflect on historical authenticity. In this regard, he is well supported in Bruce being the instigator of the meeting, in the locus of the meeting, in Bruce's proactive role in the quarrel, and in his striking the first blow. Apart from the mistaken Christian name, he is also well supported in the killing of Comyn's uncle. He is, perhaps, over-objective and misguided in ascribing the fatal blow to Bruce. Given Barbour's openness about other versions, his objective view of the sacrilegious nature of the episode, and the circumstantial support from documents, it would seem appropriate to classify this episode as "supported", despite a little documentary support of secondary elements, with a rating of 4. This assessment seems broadly in line with those of McNamee, Nicholson and Young,

⁷³ *Ibid.* II: 1754, 1755.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* II: 1757, 1756.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* III: 725.

but gives Barbour significantly more credit for historical authenticity than Barrow is prepared to do⁷⁶.

Episode 2.2: Seizure of the crown (70-194)

The assessment of the specific incident involving James Douglas must depend on the discussion of Episode 1.3, which was rated as weakly supported (rating of 3). Bower confirms⁷⁷ that Bruce hurried to Scone "taking as many with him as he could" a few days after Comyn's death, and was crowned there. The king had few supporters compared to the number of Scots that opposed him. *Lanercost*⁷⁸ reports that Bruce took some castles before his coronation at Scone, at which point "many of the nobles and commonality of that land adhered to him". Grey⁷⁹ confirms the coronation at Scone and notes the adherence of the Countess of Buchan to the king's cause. He also notes that the king "had gathered all the force of Scotland which was on his side, and some fierce young followers easily roused against the English". *Holyrood*⁸⁰ confirms the Scone location and the date (25 March), as does the London annalist⁸¹ and *Flores Historiarum*⁸². Knighton⁸³ has the inauguration at Scone, but is mistaken in his dating of "around the feast of Pentecost". Langtoft⁸⁴ points out that a new seat was required at Scone for the inauguration (the previous one having been carried off by Caernarfon), and states that the event was attended by two bishops, the abbot of Scone ("who afterwards paid it dear"), and a number of earls, barons, knights and squires. A letter⁸⁵ from the Pope (dated July 7) to Longshanks notes "the business of Scone Abbey", and the latter's anger over Scone clearly lasted into the following

⁷⁶ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 28-29; Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 71; Young, *The Comyns*, pp. 197-198; Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 140.

⁷⁷ *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp. 317.

⁷⁸ *Lanercost*, pp. 176.

⁷⁹ *Scalacronica*, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁰ *Chronicle of Holyrood*, p. 178-9.

⁸¹ *Annales Londonienses*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 76, 1882.

⁸² *Flores Historiarum*, p. 323.

⁸³ *Knighton*, p. 404.

⁸⁴ *Langtoft*, p. 367.

⁸⁵ CDS II: 1799.

year, as another such letter signifies⁸⁶. The Scone inauguration is also noted in a complaint⁸⁷ of the burgh of Perth to Caernarfon in 1308. Bishop Lamberton specifically confirmed⁸⁸ that he had offered fealty to the king for the temporality of his bishopric after the coronation. A letter⁸⁹ written from Berwick in March confirms other details. The king held castles at Dumfries, Dalswinton, Ayr, Tibbers, Rothesay, Loch Doon and Dunaverty. He had been at Glasgow, received fealty and gathered support. He is reported as crossing the Forth with 60 men-at-arms, possibly on his way to Scone. Palgrave⁹⁰ confirms the presence of a number of Scots nobles at the inauguration.

Some details of Barbour's version are not supported, but most are - either directly or implicitly. The reasonable judgement, then, is that despite the weakness associated with the James Douglas incident, this episode is assessed as confirmed, with a rating of 5. This corresponds closely with the approach of modern historians. Indeed, the details in the Berwick letter prompt Barrow⁹¹ to proclaim "yet another example of Barbour's uncanny accuracy in detail".

Episode 2.3: Longshank's reaction to the crowning (195-246)

*Flores Historiarum*⁹² reports Longshank's determination to avenge the death of Comyn. *Lanercost* confirms⁹³ the movement of English troops towards the border, and that Umfraville and John (not Philip) Mowbray were under Valence's command. It also notes that Valence admitted some former supporters of the king into Longshank's peace. Grey⁹⁴ confirms Valence's command over the English expeditionary force (see also Langtoft⁹⁵ and Knighton⁹⁶), that Mowbray and some

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* II: 1903.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* III: 68.

⁸⁸ Stones, E. L. G., *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174-1328: Some Selected Documents*, 1970, p. 138.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: pp. 130-134.

⁹⁰ Palgrave, *Documents*, p. 319.

⁹¹ Barrow, *Bruce*, note 13, p. 355.

⁹² *Flores Historiarum*, p. 324.

⁹³ *Lanercost*, pp. 176-177.

⁹⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ *Langtoft*, p. 367.

⁹⁶ *Knighton*, p. 404.

Scottish barons were with him, and that he based himself at Perth. Bower⁹⁷ mentions Valence's captaincy and notes that Perth was a "well-walled town" when occupied by Valence. Longshanks's fury and manic reaction (to the inauguration, Duncan⁹⁸ argues, rather than the death of Comyn) may be detected in the astonishing stream of instructions⁹⁹ he fired off in all directions after hearing of the king's move. These 26 letters cover every aspect of his reaction: confirmation of Valence's command; movement of supplies from England and Ireland for the campaign in Scotland; forfeiture of the king's supporters; transfer of their lands to his own supporters together with other rewards; continuous pressure on Valence to burn and harry and, especially, to capture the bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow. They also confirm Mowbray as a member of the army in Scotland. With respect to the list of supporters with the king, Palgrave¹⁰⁰ confirms these, allowing for some uncertainty over those whose Christian names are not mentioned by Barbour. There is specific documentary support for the strong force that Valence brought with him to take or kill the king¹⁰¹ comprising three bannerets, 44 knights, 210 esquires, 160 crossbowmen and nearly 2000 archers and infantry. Langtoft¹⁰² confirms that Simon Fraser was with the king before Methven (see episode 4.1), that he was captured there, taken to London and executed.

There is no mention in the sources of Fife as a reward for the capture of the king, for the Scots' inferiority in numbers, and for the king's knowledge of the enemy forces. Otherwise, Barbour's contentions are well supported, particularly by documentary evidence. In modern accounts, both McNamee and Barrow seem to accept Barbour's line while quoting other sources in support¹⁰³. Duncan's¹⁰⁴ discussion is very similar to this. Barbour's report is certainly absolutely consistent

⁹⁷ *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp. 323.

⁹⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 90n.

⁹⁹ CDS II: 1753, 1754, 1755, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1773, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1779, 1780, 1780, 1782, 1785, 1786, 1787, 1790, 1795, 1796.

¹⁰⁰ Palgrave, *Documents*, pp. 301-318.

¹⁰¹ CDS V: 492.

¹⁰² *Langtoft*, p. 371.

¹⁰³ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 31-2; Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 90-6n.

with what we know of Longshanks. Notwithstanding the poet's elementary error about Philip Mowbray (also included in Episode 2.4 below), it seems appropriate to classify this episode as strongly confirmed with a ranking of 6.

Episode 2.4: The battle of Methven (247-448)

Bower confirms the battle at Methven¹⁰⁵ as a Scots defeat, and notes that the king lost some men. Langtoft¹⁰⁶ notes that Valence commanded the English cavalry holding Perth, that the king asked Valence to give up the town, that in Valence's first attack the king killed his horse, and that the king's armour was "covered with surplices and skirts". After the English victory, the king was a fugitive without castles or towers for refuge. Knighton¹⁰⁷ merely reports that the king lost a battle against Valence and was afterwards a fugitive. *Lanercost* reports an English victory near Perth, with many Scots being killed and the king put to flight¹⁰⁸. Grey¹⁰⁹ notes the subterfuge, without giving credit to Umfraville. He says that Valence did nothing till the Scots marched away from Perth and camped at Methven, whereupon he made a surprise attack and defeated them. Haliburton rather than Mowbray is said to have almost captured the king, but to have freed him on realising his identity. *Holyrood*¹¹⁰ gives 19 June as the date of the battle, as does *Annales Londonienses*¹¹¹. Guisborough¹¹² confirms that the battle was at Perth, that the English force was led by Valence (though much smaller than the documentary evidence confirms (see Episode 2.3), that Valence employed a subterfuge to trick the Scots, that they attacked while the Scots were eating and resting, that many Scots were killed, and that the king escaped with a few survivors. Thomas Randolph is identified as a prisoner, and many Scots were slain or captured. Documentary evidence is scant but

¹⁰⁵ *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 323.

¹⁰⁶ *Langtoft*, p. 371.

¹⁰⁷ *Knighton*, p. 404.

¹⁰⁸ *Lanercost*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ *Holyrood*, p. 179.

¹¹¹ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 148.

¹¹² *Guisborough*, p. 368.

definitive. Randolph is reported as captured by Valence in defeating the Scots at Methven¹¹³, and Malcolm of Innerpeffray is identified as one of the king's supporters at the battle¹¹⁴. Inchmartin and Somerville¹¹⁵ are reported as captured at Methven and are summarily executed at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in August 1306.

Thus, some aspects of Barbour's version have very strong support, others have some support, while the circumstantial details of tactics have little or no support. There is also disagreement over who almost captured the king. Modern writers tend to ignore this incident, though Traquair notes that "tradition" allots the role to Haliburton¹¹⁶. On the strength of some documentary evidence, Duncan¹¹⁷ argues that Barbour is wrong in claiming that Christopher Seton saved the king from Haliburton, on the basis that Alexander Seton¹¹⁸ was taken prisoner after the battle. The conclusion does not, of course, follow from the evidence. In addition, Duncan argues that "...it is difficult to see how Christopher Seton could have reached Loch Doon castle (which he defended in August) after Methven" (the battle was fought on 19 June). This line of reasoning fits poorly with Duncan's earlier contention¹¹⁹ that Bruce could have ridden from London to Lochmaben (in winter) in a week.

The main thrust of Barbour's, Guisborough's and Grey's reports is similar, though differing in detail. It is unlikely that Barbour shared a common source with Guisborough, though this is possible in the case of Grey. There is documentary support for some of Barbour's details. Thus, it seems appropriate to classify this episode as confirmed with a rating of 5.

¹¹³ CDS II: 1807.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* II: 1858.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* II: 1811.

¹¹⁶ Traquair, *Freedom's Sword*, p. 137.

¹¹⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 102n.

¹¹⁸ CDS V: 471.

¹¹⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 78n.

Episode 2.5: Aftermath of Methven (449-592)

Bower confirms that the women joined the king's party¹²⁰, and *Lanercost* notes a large number of summary executions among the king's supporters¹²¹. There is some indirect documentary evidence of English military activity as pressure on the king increased after Methven¹²², and, as noted above, direct evidence for the summary executions of some captured at Methven including Inchmartin and Somerville¹²³, and for the imprisonment of others¹²⁴. Also noted above was evidence of Randolph's capture, after which he was pardoned and kept in ward by Adam Gordon at Inverkip castle¹²⁵. Duncan¹²⁶ suggests, on reasonable grounds, that William Burradon was an English prisoner of Edward Bruce. Otherwise, there is no mention in the sources of the other individuals named above.

Here we have strong evidence for little, little evidence for much, and no evidence for some. While it may be argued that Barbour's circumstantial account was drawn from a now-lost source, we must assess as a counterweight the notion of a visit to Aberdeen after Methven. Barrow seems to accept this as possible¹²⁷, but it is rejected (for reasons that are not clear) by Duncan¹²⁸. Methven took place on 19 June. Allowing five days to regroup and provision, the king would have arrived in Aberdeen by 2 July, given that he used the safest and most likely route via Glen Shee and the Dee valley. It might then have taken four days for Valence to gather this intelligence and news of the king's route to Aberdeen. Moving a column up the coast and another via Strathmore, he would be visible to the king's scouts by about 11 July. It is unlikely that Valence would leave the Dee-Glen Shee route open, and even less likely that the king would retrace his steps. Accordingly, his escape route might lead north-west to Huntly, then south-west via Strathspey and Glengarry, and thence

¹²⁰ *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 323.

¹²¹ *Lanercost*, p. 178.

¹²² CDS III: 1973, 1975, 1803, 1806, 1809, 1810, 1819, 1820.

¹²³ *Ibid.* II: 1811.

¹²⁴ CDS V: 472.

¹²⁵ CDS II: 1807.

¹²⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 104.

¹²⁷ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 160-161.

¹²⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 106.

to Loch Tay. Given the nature of the ground, the shortage of provisions, the need for constant scouting and careful movement, and the mixed nature of the party, it is most unlikely that the king could have been at Dail Righ by 11 August. Thus, the sequencing of the Aberdeen visit is highly suspect.

In light of the evidence available and the conceptual discussion of the Aberdeen visit, it seems unreasonable to classify this episode higher than weakly supported, and it is given a rating of 3.

Episode 3.1: The battle of Dail Righ (1-92: 147-186)

Bower¹²⁹ is the only other source to make reference to this episode; it is not referred to even indirectly elsewhere. Here we have the king fleeing from his enemies and "hiding his men on the borders of Atholl and Argyll". He is defeated at Dail Righ on 11 August and put to flight without, however, losing many men. MacKenzie¹³⁰ gives one version of the Lorn-Comyn connection, Duncan another¹³¹; in neither is Red Comyn the uncle. Duncan's argument is highly specific and it leads us safely to suppose that the lord of Lorn's uncle was the John Comyn who was Guardian in 1286. If, however, John of Lorn was whom Barbour had in mind, then this lord of Lorn is commended by Longshanks on 14 September 1306 for serving himself and Caernarfon well¹³², and this is very likely the connection with Dail Righ. MacKenzie¹³³ has a partial identification for Baron Macnaughton, but Duncan's¹³⁴ is more specific (witness to a charter with John Menteith and Donald Campbell, about 1310-20); there may, then, be some basis for Barbour's naming of this individual. It is highly probable that the battle of Dail Righ took place, but there is little evidence to support the circumstances of Barbour's version, though none of it is intrinsically unlikely. It must, therefore, be classified as weakly supported with a rating of 3.

¹²⁹ *Scotichronicon*, pp. 323.

¹³⁰ MacKenzie, *Bruce*, p 396.

¹³¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 112.

¹³² CDS II: 1830.

¹³³ MacKenzie, *Bruce*, p. 397-398.

¹³⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 118.

Episode 3.2: The first attack by three men (93-146)**Episode 5.5: The second attack by three men (523-658)****Episode 7.1: The third attack by three men (105-232)****Episode 7.3: The fourth attack by three men (381-494)**

Due to their superficial similarity, these four episodes are considered together. Historians have taken a variety of approaches to them, from reporting everything faithfully in detail to condemning them as fantasy or as four versions of the same incident. Duncan¹³⁵ takes a middle course that, reported from a distance, attacks 2 and 4 might be the same. He builds on the idiosyncratic hypothesis that the king was approached by three innocent man (casting down their bows as a sign of friendship in one case) whom he then attacked and killed because he was “edgy”. This is probably not a notion that Duncan would wish to be subjected to scrutiny.

According to the multi-author hypothesis to be outlined in Chapter 8, Barbour wrote up the first attack himself, and a sub-author wrote up the other three. There is little scope here for confusion or for expanding one incident into four. The sub-author clearly accepts that there may be other versions of these episodes, as he sets out an alternative to how the king and his foster brother escaped pursuit by the bloodhound (Book 7, lines 53-78).

The first attack and the third, according to content, context and structure, are quite clearly different episodes from one another and from the second and fourth attacks. In addition, the first attack is separated from the other three by about a year and many other actions. Attacks 2 and 4 differ in a number of important aspects. One is carried out by a family group, the other by three apparently unrelated individuals; one involves hounds and bows, the other has swords only; one has the king at his private toilet in the morning, the other has him out hunting; one has the king on his

¹³⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 220, 278n.

own, the other has him accompanied by a page. It is difficult to argue cogently that these are different versions of the same account.

There can be no special significance in the series of attacks on the king. Assassination would be an obvious remedy sought by his enemies, especially the Comyns. During the king's fugitive period, the surprise would be if there were only four attempts on his life, apart from battles and skirmishes. Nor is there any special significance in the number of attackers. An assassination party would have to be small to travel and get into position without attracting notice. Also, three is the minimum number needed to "encircle" a single opponent in a hand-to-hand struggle.

Taken together, the circumstances of these attacks seem reasonable, and present no internal or external inconsistency. However, they are also minor episodes. The argument above has suggested that, while uncorroborated, these episodes fit both the internal context of the poem and the external context of the times. It seems reasonable to rank all four as plausible (rating of 1), but they should be used as a source of historical information only with extreme caution.

Episode 3.3: Aftermath of Dail Righ (187-266: 299-404)

This is another of Barbour's very circumstantial accounts and, again, none of it is intrinsically unlikely, though, since it was late August, it could hardly be termed winter. Bower¹³⁶ notes that the king's men were overcome by fear and separated from one another. The queen fled to St. Duthac, Neil Bruce and the ladies to Kildrummy. Knighton¹³⁷ reports the capture of both, but does not mention St. Duthac. Duncan¹³⁸ notes that there is no mention at all of ladies in the description of the battle of Dail Righ, which rightly makes him sceptical of this detail concerning them in the aftermath. He also observes that the notion of the king encouraging his men in adversity is also to be found in great detail in Fordun¹³⁹. The king's brother

¹³⁶ *Scotichronicon*, VI, p. 323.

¹³⁷ *Knighton*, p. 404.

¹³⁸ *Duncan, Bruce*, p. 116.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

(unidentified, presumably Neil) was taken at Kildrummy in September¹⁴⁰. Otherwise, there is no corroboration, and this episode must be classified as weakly supported with a rating of 3.

Episode 3.4: The king on Loch Lomond (405-512)

Neil Campbell would be an appropriate person for the scouting mission to Kintyre. Apart from having kinsmen in the area, as Barbour noted (lines 403-404), he also had influence in Kintyre¹⁴¹. Duncan¹⁴² suggests that, after Dial Righ, the king took his party from Tyndrum to Dalmally at the head of Loch Awe, then headed south to Loch Fyne where he dispatched Sir Neil Campbell on his mission. This is quite likely, as it would have the king heading into less hostile territory, and also sending Campbell off into Kintyre, among his “kinsmen”. It would also fit well with a three-day passage to Loch Lomond, making about fifteen miles per day. According to Duncan’s account, the king travelled by Glenkinglass, Arrochar and Tarbet. This may be less likely than his previous suggestion. The two places on the west side of Loch Lomond most likely to be fortified against him were Luss and Tarbet. It is, perhaps, more likely, that the king travelled via Arrochar, the east side of Loch Fyne and Glen Douglas to Inverbeg. The Inverbeg-Rowardennan crossing is shorter than the Tarbet-Rowchoish (2,600 yards against 5,300 yards), and it would also take the king directly into Lennox country, which the Tarbet-Rowchoish crossing would not. At a rowing speed of two knots, a reasonable figure for Loch Lomond in September, twenty crossings could be made in daylight, and, say, eighteen in darkness. That would allow for 76 fighting men to be rowed across, with perhaps a similar number of “small folk” swimming with packs. The corresponding number would be 38 for the Tarbet-Rowchoish crossing. The Tarbet numbers seem too small, despite the

¹⁴⁰ CDS II: 1829.

¹⁴¹ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 163.

¹⁴² Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 132.

successive reductions of the king's force since Methven, and also in view of the 300 that crossed to Rathlin (allowing for some incrementation from Lennox's men).

Väthjunker¹⁴³ passes over Douglas's part in this episode with the comment that Barbour depicts him "...with remarkable realism if not historical accuracy". Given that King Robert had to take a party from Dail Righ to Dunaverty, the account given by Barbour seems internally consistent in the context and externally consistent with the times. It may therefore be assessed as plausible (rating of 1), but used only with great caution as a source of historical knowledge.

Episode 3.5: Escape to Rathlin by way of Kintyre (567-762)

Grey¹⁴⁴ confirms that the king was pursued into Kintyre by, he says, the English. He goes on to say that the queen, Neil Bruce and the earl of Atholl were captured in Kintyre, but this is not generally accepted by historians of the period. *Lanercost*¹⁴⁵ observes briefly that at this time the king "was lurking in the remote isles of Scotland". Duncan¹⁴⁶ suggests that the king was heading for Islay, was blown off-course to Rathlin, and left after a brief stay.

Documentary evidence is more helpful. English siege engines were sent to Dunaverty in May 1306, and there was much correspondence between Longshanks and Percy, his commander in Kintyre later in the year¹⁴⁷. It appears that Dunaverty was in the king's possession in August 1306. Longshanks was pressing Sir John Botetourt and Sir John Menteith to greater efforts over the siege of Dunaverty at the end of September 1306¹⁴⁸. The castle had fallen to the English by October 5, 1306¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴³ Väthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 171.

¹⁴⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁵ *Lanercost*, p. 178.

¹⁴⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 145n.

¹⁴⁷ CDS V: 472.

¹⁴⁸ CDS II: 1833, 1834.

¹⁴⁹ CDS V: 457.

Some of this supports the basis of Barbour's version, but not the details. Otherwise, there is no other helpful evidence, and we are obliged to classify this episode as "weak support" with a rating of 3.

Episode 4.1 Retribution of Longshanks (1-58)

Bower¹⁵⁰ confirms the general nature of Longshanks's retribution against the king's friends and supporters, particularly the executions of Sir Simon Fraser¹⁵¹ and Sir Walter Logan. He also notes that Longshanks put prelates in chains, without identifying individuals. *Lanercost*¹⁵² confirms the execution of many of the king's friends and supporters including Neil, Thomas and Alexander Bruce, the earl of Atholl, Simon Fraser, Reginald Crawford, John Wallace and Christopher Seton. Langtoft¹⁵³ corroborates the deaths of John Wallace, Simon Fraser, the earl of Atholl, and Christopher Seton. Grey¹⁵⁴ also confirms the imprisonment in England of the bishops of Glasgow and St Andrews, as well as the abbot of Scone, as does Langtoft¹⁵⁵.

Documentary sources confirm much of Barbour's account of this period. Longshanks issued many edicts against the king and his supporters, stripping them of possessions and demanding their capture¹⁵⁶. There are reports of the executions of David Inchmartin, John Cambo, John Seton, Bernard Mowat, John Somerville, Robert Wishart, Alexander Scrymgeour and Christopher Seton¹⁵⁷. The capture and chained imprisonment in England of the bishops of Glasgow and St Andrews and the

¹⁵⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII: 13, 14, 15, 16.

¹⁵¹ See also *Annales Londonienses*, p. 148.

¹⁵² *Lanercost*, pp. 178-180, 182.

¹⁵³ *Langtoft*, pp. 373, 377, 379.

¹⁵⁴ *Scalacronica*, pp. 32-36.

¹⁵⁵ *Langtoft*, p. 373.

¹⁵⁶ CDS II: 1747-8, 1751, 1754-5, 1757, 1759, 1762-4, 1766-7, 1771, 1773, 1775-7, 1780-2, 1785-7, 1790-1, 1793, 1801, 1803-4, 1807, 1820, 1826, 1833-4, 1836-7, 1840, 1842-3, 1849, 1854, 1857-8, 1862, 1883, 1888-9, 1893, 1895-7, 1900, 1902, 1907-9.

¹⁵⁷ CDS II: 1811, 1841, 1861, 1894, 1910.

abbot of Scone is confirmed¹⁵⁸. The movement of Longshanks towards Scotland with an army¹⁵⁹ and the siege of Loch Doon¹⁶⁰ are noted.

Barbour's account of this episode is strongly corroborated by the other sources. There are some details, of course, that are not confirmed, but that is also true of all the other sources. *Lanercost* has Reginald Crawford hanged and beheaded at Carlisle, not Ayr. Duncan¹⁶¹ contends that Barbour has moved the execution of Neil Bruce from September 1306 to July 1307 for artistic effect. This is a plausible explanation, but is weak on two counts. First, there is no evidence that Neil Bruce was executed immediately following the fall of Kildrummy. Second, much of Duncan's interpretation seems to depend on Barbour's view of the period over which Longshanks was "near to death". Despite these minor points, we must conclude that Barbour's account is strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 4.2: Siege and fall of Kildrummy (59-183)

Grey¹⁶² relates the fall of an un-named Scottish castle at which the queen, Neil Bruce, the earl of Atholl, Alan Durward and others were taken. The queen was imprisoned in England and the others executed. He also noted that Hereford and Lancaster invested Kildrummy; when it fell, Christopher Seton was taken and executed at Dumfries.

Documents confirm the presence of Caernarfon in Scotland at this time¹⁶³, and his command at the taking of Kildrummy castle¹⁶⁴. The siege of Kildrummy and the taking of Neil Bruce, Robert Boyd and Alexander Lindsay are recorded¹⁶⁵. The capture and imprisonment in England of the queen, Marjorie Bruce, the countess of Buchan, Mary and Christian Bruce are confirmed¹⁶⁶.

¹⁵⁸ CDS II: 1780, 1785-6, 1812-14, 1820, 1824-5, 1827-8.

¹⁵⁹ CDS II: 1806.

¹⁶⁰ CDS II: 1819.

¹⁶¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 160.

¹⁶² *Scalacronica*, pp. 32-36.

¹⁶³ CDS II: 1773, 1803, 1809.

¹⁶⁴ CDS II: 1829.

¹⁶⁵ CDS II: 1829, 1833.

¹⁶⁶ CDS II: 1851, 1910, 1963; see also *Flores Historiarum*, p. 324.

Barbour gives much circumstantial detail that cannot be corroborated, but the main lines of his report are supported by chronicle and documentary evidence. Duncan¹⁶⁷ suggests rationally that there is no reason to believe Barbour's claim that all the Scots at Kildrummy were hanged; some execution of garrison troops is more likely. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to assess this episode as confirmed, with a rating of 5.

Episode 4.3: Death of Longshanks (184-218: 307-335)

Bower¹⁶⁸ confirms the death of Longshanks at Burgh-on-Sands on 7 July 1307 (this point is backed up by *Annales Paulini*¹⁶⁹, *Flores Historiarum*¹⁷⁰, and Langtoft¹⁷¹) as he was leading an army into Scotland, and the succession of his son Caernarfon¹⁷². *Vita*¹⁷³ also briefly confirms the death of Longshanks on 7 July 1307, and the succession of Caernarfon. *Lanercost*¹⁷⁴ reports the death of Longshanks on 7 July 1307 at Burgh-on-Sands and the succession of Caernarfon. Grey¹⁷⁵ also confirms the death of Longshanks at Burgh-on-Sands in July 1307 and the accession of Caernarfon. Documentary evidence records the change of kingship¹⁷⁶.

Duncan¹⁷⁷ notes Barbour's implication that Longshanks died in September 1307 rather than July, apparently for artistic and/or propaganda purposes. Otherwise, we may accept that Barbour has supplied an accurate version of this episode, which may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

¹⁶⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 158n.

¹⁶⁸ *Scotichronicon*, XII: 13, 14, 15, 16.

¹⁶⁹ *Annales Paulini*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series 76, 1882.

¹⁷⁰ *Flores Historiarum*, p. 327.

¹⁷¹ *Langtoft*, pp. 379-383.

¹⁷² See also *Annales Londonienses*, p. 151; *Annales Paulini*, p. 257.

¹⁷³ *Vita*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Lanercost*, p. 182.

¹⁷⁵ *Scalacronica*, pp. 35-6.

¹⁷⁶ CDS III: 2,3.

¹⁷⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 160n.

Episode 4.4: Douglas and Boyd on Arran (336-453)

Evaluation of Episode 3.5 above threw significant doubt on the notion of Rathlin as a winter base for the king and his party. What is certain is that he returned to Carrick by sea from the west. Barrow has a cogent synthesis¹⁷⁸ of this part of the king's campaign, and is happy to accept the Arran version. Whether coming from Islay or Kintyre, it seems inconceivable that the king could ignore Arran. Apart from consideration of military tactics, the passage from Arran to Carrick is about half of that from Kintyre, thus minimising the risk of being caught by English ships while making the passage. Sir John Hastings certainly owned Brodick Castle¹⁷⁹. Sir Robert Boyd's lands were in Ayrshire and he would certainly have known Arran, as he claims (Book 4, line 355). Douglas's impatience on Rathlin (or Kintyre) is absolutely consistent with what we know of him, as is his ambush of the provisioning party and pursuit of the garrison soldiers to the gate of the castle, his filching of English arms and provisions, and his removal to a "strong place" after failing to take the castle. The implication that it took a good part of the day to row up Kilbrannan Sound is reasonable. Whether Douglas and Boyd landed at Blackwaterfoot or Lochranza, an overnight trek to Brodick is also consistent with the distance and terrain.

Working on the assumption that Douglas joined the king later than Barbour would have us believe, Våthjunker¹⁸⁰ has doubts that Douglas participated in this episode, but the chain of argument is tenuous. Given that a move to Carrick via Arran is internally consistent within Barbour's description of the episode, is consistent with corroborated episodes before and after, this episode may be rated as highly plausible (rated at 2).

¹⁷⁸ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 166-171.

¹⁷⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 168*n*.

¹⁸⁰ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 173.

Episode 4.5: The King on Arran (454-517)

Duncan's¹⁸¹ interpretation is somewhat confusing, postulating that Douglas persuaded Boyd to rebel against Longshanks, and that they entered Arran from the Ayrshire coast. He believes that the meeting of the king and Douglas on Arran is Barbour's invention, basing this on an observation in Guisborough¹⁸². Why Guisborough's version (written at a distance, and without access to records or participants) should be trustworthier than Barbour's is not explained. The English chronicler notes that the king was on Kintyre before he came to Turnberry. He does not say, and his statement is not evidence that, the king did not travel by way of Arran. John Hastings was keeping a watch for the king and his boats toward the end of January 1307¹⁸³, as was Hugh Bisset and John Menteith¹⁸⁴ at the same time.

Nevertheless, there is no corroboration of Barbour's record. While it is both internally and externally consistent, it is not more so than the Guisborough version. If Barbour is falsifying this episode, it must be for some well-hidden reason, and certainly not for propaganda purposes. Accordingly, the episode is assessed as plausible (rating of 1)

Episode 4.6: Preparation for the invasion of Carrick (518-667)

There is some indirect documentary evidence¹⁸⁵ that Longshanks went to some considerable effort to keep the king away from the mainland. Hugh Bissett was commanded to bring many well-manned vessels from Ireland to join John of Menteith in the hunt for the king. Simon of Montacute was appointed commander of this fleet. *Lanercost*¹⁸⁶ also notes that, at this time, the king was "lurking in the remote isles of Scotland". Sir Henry Percy was in Scotland at this time¹⁸⁷, almost certainly in command of a force or a district under the overall control of Valence.

¹⁸¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 166-172n.

¹⁸² Guisborough, p. 370.

¹⁸³ CDS V: 512.

¹⁸⁴ CDS II: 1888.

¹⁸⁵ CDS II: 1888-9, 1893.

¹⁸⁶ *Lanercost*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁷ CDS II: 1895.

Guisborough¹⁸⁸ confirms specifically that the king returned to Carrick, having previously sent some of his men to collect the Martinmas (11 November) rents. Duncan¹⁸⁹ notes that Guisborough gives the wrong date – St. Michael's day (29 September) instead of St. Matthias (24 February), though this does not fit with his earlier argument¹⁹⁰ that the king crossed on 10 February.

Thus, the fact that the king was in the west before returning to Carrick by sea is fairly well attested, as is the presence of Percy in a commanding military role. As might be expected, there is no confirmation in the sources of the activities of a commoner like Cuthbert. However, the notion of sending someone ahead to spy out the land is in keeping with the king's newly adopted guerrilla tactics. We may judge this episode as being supported, with a rating of 4.

Episode 5.1: Passage to Carrick (1-89)

Bower¹⁹¹ relates how the king returned to Carrick after spending much time in the islands off the West Coast, being helped by Christina of the Isles. We have noted in the previous section that the king may have crossed to Carrick some time between 10 and 24 February (1306-07). The documentary evidence¹⁹² for Longshanks's reaction to the news of the king's return suggests that 10 February, or perhaps a few days before, is the more likely date. The same sources indicate that Percy was in south west Scotland at the time, probably under Valence's command. Percy was given the earldom of Carrick at an undefined date¹⁹³. Duncan argues convincingly that this can be put in April 1306¹⁹⁴, and accepts that Barbour is right in placing Percy at Turnberry at the time of the king's crossing to Carrick¹⁹⁵. Percy appears to have been located in Carrick as late as Michaelmas 1308¹⁹⁶.

¹⁸⁸ Guisborough, p. 370.

¹⁸⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 192n.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 190n.

¹⁹¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 12.

¹⁹² CDS II: 1895, 1896, 1897; CDS V: 512c.

¹⁹³ Percy Chartulary, pp. 452-3.

¹⁹⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 192n.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192n.

¹⁹⁶ CDS III: 52.

There is no corroboration for Barbour's circumstantial detail (Cuthbert and his fire, the king's exchange with Edward Bruce), but he clearly has a strong basis for his version. It may be assessed as supported, with a rating of 4.

Episode 5.2: Early action in Carrick (90-216)

Bower¹⁹⁷ says that, after his return to Carrick, the king took back one of his own castles (un-named, but may refer to Turnberry after Percy's departure), killed the inhabitants, destroyed the castle, and divided the loot among his men. This source also observes that the return to Carrick took place after the king had endured adversity for about a year (after his coronation), so Barbour's observation about a spring return to Carrick may be right, despite the discussion in the previous section. Grey¹⁹⁸ notes that the king had assembled all his adherents in Carrick. There is much indirect documentary evidence about English reaction against King Robert at this time. On 12 February 1307, Longshanks sent a party of 25 knights on a foray against the king¹⁹⁹, indicating that he arrived in Carrick shortly before. Longshanks also demands news from Valence at Ayr, with similar messages to Percy, Sir John de St John, Gloucester, Hereford and others²⁰⁰. He enquires about desertions from a force of men from Cumberland and Westmoreland that were despatched to deal with the king²⁰¹. Two days later he issues a writ to the same areas for 1500 reinforcements²⁰². A month later, he is calling for another 2300 men from north and west England²⁰³. Perhaps among these was the rescue party described by Barbour. Finally, there are orders for substantial wages and supplies to support the campaign against the king in Carrick and Galloway²⁰⁴. There is documentary evidence for the presence of Roger de St John in Scotland two months after the king's return to Carrick²⁰⁵, and a

¹⁹⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 12.

¹⁹⁸ *Scalacronica*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁹ CDS II: 1897.

²⁰⁰ CDS II: 1895-8.

²⁰¹ CDS II: 1900.

²⁰² CDS II: 1902.

²⁰³ CDS II: 1913.

²⁰⁴ CDS II: 1923-4.

²⁰⁵ CDS V: 490.

suggestion that Walter Lisle may have been in Scotland in the following year²⁰⁶. Duncan²⁰⁷ observes that the available evidence does not identify a period when the king was in Carrick, his brother in Galloway, and Valence in Edinburgh. This may well be an error on Barbour's part; equally, it may be that Duncan is expecting too much from the sources.

Again, in this account, there are details of individuals that would not be mentioned in the sources. Otherwise, there is a measure of support for Barbour's account. It probably over-emphasises the part played by Percy, but the actions of the king's forces in Carrick are consistent with the recorded response of Longshanks. There is nothing intrinsically unlikely about Barbour's version of this incident, and there is nothing contradictory in the sources; nor, however, is there any confirmation of the wealth of circumstantial detail about the "lady of that country". Overall, this episode may be assessed as supported, with a rating of 4.

Episode 5.3: First attack on Douglas Castle (217-428)

This is the famous "Douglas Larder". According to Duncan²⁰⁸, Barbour's account is "so detailed and convincing that it must have had a written source". He dates it to 7 April 1308, after Episode 8.4, the third attack on Douglas Castle, below, but is almost certainly wrong in this. His argument is that this attack, because of its ruthlessness, must have followed rather than preceded the attack in Episode 8.4. However, Longshanks's grant of money to Clifford for repairs²⁰⁹ was made on 30 May 1307, which tends to confirm Barbour's chronology, a point with which Våthjunker appears to concur²¹⁰. However, she regards this episode as no more than Barbour's opportunity to sketch the dimensions of Douglas as a freedom fighter²¹¹. There is no evidence that it happened, she states, and, if it did, it was not the first but

²⁰⁶ *RotSc*: 1: 59a.

²⁰⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 212n.

²⁰⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 202-208n.

²⁰⁹ CDS V: 512.

²¹⁰ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 36

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

the final attack on the castle²¹². There is no evidence for this argument one way or the other though, in terms of the assessments that are being made of Barbour's work, this argument of Vāthjunker's has a degree of plausibility.

St. Bride's church is correctly named, and the subtlety of the planning is a hallmark of Douglas. Equally, the Douglas Larder must have served as the kind of direct and explicit warning to an occupying force so often used by guerrilla groups through history. Equally, in burning his own castle without compunction, Douglas was attempting to follow the king's policy of destruction that was implemented on so many other occasions. Thus, it is difficult to disagree with Duncan's assessment of this account, even in points of detail. However, there is no directly corroborative evidence, so this episode should be assessed as highly plausible (rating of 2).

Episode 5.4: Reaction of de Valence to Scots action (429-522)

We have seen above that Clifford was recompensed for restoring Douglas Castle. Duncan²¹³ suggests, with scant justification, that identifying Thirwall as the new captain is little more than a device to link with the second attack on Douglas Castle (Book 6). Further, he states that there is no known period when the king was in Carrick, Sir Edward Bruce in Galloway and de Valence in Edinburgh. Note, however, that Barbour is less specific about de Valence than Duncan supposes. Umfraville²¹⁴ was certainly in Ayrshire at this time, but not at Ayr. Despite some particles of apparently supporting evidence, this episode appears unsubstantiated and anecdotal. Accordingly, it is assessed as not plausible (rating of 0).

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 270-275.

²¹³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 212-216n.

²¹⁴ CDS II: 1931.

Episode 6.1: The king is pursued by Galloway men (1-180: 287-322)

While this episode is uncorroborated, circumstances surrounding the king's activity in southwest Scotland at this time strongly suggest either that it happened or that it is representative of a number of incidents that did. Duncan²¹⁵ suggests that the English did not instigate this pursuit; it was a freelance escapade by indigenous enemies in Galloway. He also notes that it became an internationally famous incident, being repeated later by Jean le Bel in his chronicle²¹⁶.

The country did not, in fact, immediately come over to the king, as Barbour reports; his enemies, supporting the Comyns as well as the English occupiers, must have tried this and other methods of apprehending him. The king's personal behaviour during this episode is entirely consistent with what we know of him. Accordingly, this episode may be rated as plausible (rating of 1).

Episode 6.2: Second attack on Douglas Castle (375-452)

At some point between 1314 and 1319 (according to Bain's reckoning²¹⁷), Caernarfon was petitioned by Lucas de Barry, formerly valet to Longshanks. He claimed recompense for long service in Scotland, including a period with Clifford at 'Douueglas' castle when the king and 'Sir' James Douglas attacked it. Douglas was not knighted at this time, and there is no other evidence that King Robert was involved in any of the three attacks on Douglas castle described by Barbour. Våthjunker²¹⁸, however, accepts de Barry's observation that the king was present. Note, though, that the Scots did not, on this occasion, get inside the castle, so de Barry could easily have been mistaken as to the identity of all his attackers. Våthjunker does not believe that this is a real incident; rather, she implies, it was inserted by Barbour to show how carefully Douglas planned his operations²¹⁹.

²¹⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 224n.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226n.

²¹⁷ CDS III: 682.

²¹⁸ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 36.

²¹⁹ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 180.

John Thirlwall, valet to Sir Adam Swinburn, was in the pay of Longshanks early in 1307²²⁰. He was involved in the hunt for the king, probably operating in the Glen Trool area. There is no evidence that this is the same Thirlwall as the warden of Douglas castle, but the coincidence of names is interesting. Note, however, that Barbour (V: 460) refers to the warden as “Ane of the Thyrlwallys”. Longshanks sent a letter to Kintyre to another, or perhaps the same Thirlwall, on 16 September 1306, with another letter (same contents?) going to Percy at the same time²²¹.

Thus, there may be some evidence to support Barbour about an attack on Douglas castle. The de Barry plea probably does not relate to the first of the three attacks on Douglas Castle, but there is no certainty over this. Despite this strong documentary evidence that an attack did take place, the associated doubt makes it difficult to assess this episode as more weakly supported (rating of 3).

Episode 6.3: Tracker dog pursues the king (453-674: VII 1-104)

Coming so soon after Episode 6.1, both in actual chronology and in the poem, it is tempting to see repetition of the story line, and that would lead to this episode being given a much lower rating than that for Episode 6.1. However, there is one notable fact in Barbour’s account that is corroborated. Documentary evidence²²² puts John of Lorn (Argyll) at Ayr with 22 men-at-arms and 800 foot (precisely the number given by Barbour) on 19 July 1307. In addition, de Valence was in the area (Dalmellington, Glenken, Doon) at the same time²²³. Umfraville was at Cumnock Castle on 18 May 1307²²⁴. The English occupied Cumnock Castle at least until August 28 1307, so it would be reasonable for the king to be mustering his forces nearby, and for Valence to be searching for him²²⁵.

²²⁰ CDS II: 1923.

²²¹ CDS V: 472.

²²² CDS II: 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 1925, 1935, 1938, 1942, 1953.

²²⁴ CDS II: 1931.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1928, 1931, 1933; CDS V: 485, 495.

If the tracker dog element is put to one side and the episode is seen as part of de Valence's concerted hunt for the king, it appears to fit the context of the summer of 1307 much better. Two related details should also be noted. First, the king is taken by surprise for the first (and perhaps only) time during his "guerrilla" period. Second, the inclusion of Randolph with de Valence's party, and his enthusiasm in capturing the king's banner, seem to be consistent with his known characteristics and evolving world view. Duncan²²⁶ believes that these mentions of Randolph indicate that Barbour has an accurate source for this episode. However, he also remarks that the description of the chase is not, for him, very convincing. Taking all these points into consideration, this episode may be assessed as plausible (rating of 1), like Episode 6.1.

Episode 7.2: The king meets Douglas and Edward Bruce (233-380)

On 13 September 1307, Caernarfon appointed John of Brittany²²⁷ as his lieutenant of Scotland in place of de Valence, who was ordered to stay in Scotland on 7 August, then returned to England on 12 October. So perhaps Valence did, indeed, withdraw to Carlisle though not, perhaps for the reason, or at the time, that Barbour suggests. With respect to the rendezvous after being hunted and separated, followed by the immediate attack on an enemy post, this is entirely consistent with the nature of warfare in 1306/7 until the battle of Loudoun. There is, of course, no support for the story of the woman who passed her two sons over to the king as followers. Accordingly, this episode is assessed as plausible (rating of 1).

Episode 7.4: The battle of Glen Trool (495-642)

The stone memorial in Glen Trool gives the date of this action as March 1307. Duncan²²⁸ leads an alternative argument for 12-23 June. This appears to be based on

²²⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 248n.

²²⁷ CDS III: 12.

²²⁸ Duncan: *Bruce*, pp. 282-3.

an undated document²²⁹, as well as on the documentary evidence quoted for the previous four episodes. Duncan accepts Bain's guess of June 1307 for this document, but Barrow puts it at April²³⁰. Barron²³¹ also accepts the latter date. Duncan concludes his discussion of the timing of this battle by noting that the English lost some horses in pursuing the king from Glentool to "Glenheur". The document from which he draws this information is dated May 30, 1307; this hardly allows for the battle to have been fought between 12-23 June.

Documents refer to a number of troop movements related to action in the Glen Trool area²³² between February and June. There is no direct evidence of action at Glen Trool, though the English concentration on the area makes it likely that the king was there for some time. Barbour's estimate of 1500 in the English force is possible in view of the troop movement orders noted above, but it is more likely to be an overestimate. De Valence is the most likely leader of the expedition, but there is no direct evidence. Clifford is known to be in Galloway on 23 February²³³. De Vaux is known to have been active in Scotland between February 1304 and July 1307²³⁴. Though there is no direct evidence, both could have joined de Valence for the Glen Trool action. Thus, there is much strong evidence peripheral to Barbour's report of military action in Glen Trool around the end of March or beginning of April 1307. However, it is circumstantial, and cannot be rated higher than 4 (supported).

²²⁹ CDS II: 1942.

²³⁰ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 361, note 30.

²³¹ Barron, *War of Independence*, p. 261.

²³² CDS II: 1923, 1942.

²³³ CDS II: 1923.

²³⁴ CDS II: 1706, 1741, 1938.

Chapter 5

Edirford to Bannockburn

“There is no Wardrobe Book to give details of the Bannockburn campaign¹.”

Episode 8.1: The skirmish at Edirford (1-106)

If Magharnock’s Way has any connection with “Macharnock Moore” in Blaeu² as Duncan³ suggests, then Magharnock’s Way is not the A77 as Duncan concludes, but the B764 from Eaglesham. This would be a more sensible way to approach (from the north) rather than via Strathaven (from the east) if Valence and Mowbray had no clear idea of how much of Cunningham had submitted to the king. MacKenzie⁴ makes a convincing case that Edirford comes from the Gaelic *eadar*, “between”, and Old English *furd*, “ford”. He takes his analysis of the name no further, but it could have two meanings of significance here. First, it could identify a location between two fords, probably close together, but on different burns. Second, it could mean two fords, probably close together, but on different links of the same burn. In either case, the location would provide Douglas with a perfect ambush site on which he could tackle a much larger force, letting part pass the first ford, then attacking in the land between the fords that would probably be marshy. In the latter case, the English would probably be leading their horses, thus explaining why Barbour reports no horse killings. If the second meaning of Edirford is accepted, then the ambush could have taken place anywhere along the length of the way where it ran close to and crossed Magharnock Water (now Kingwell Burn). If the first meaning is accepted, the most likely location for Douglas’s ambush is half a mile northeast of Eaglesham near the confluence of the Ardoch burn with the White Cart Water. This is about 800 yards south of the present-day B764.

¹ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 61.

² *Blaeu*, plate 17, p. 41.

³ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 290n.

⁴ MacKenzie, *Bruce*, p. 413n.

This incident may have taken place as the culmination of a pursuit of Douglas from an earlier action (14 September 1307) in Paisley forest (south of Paisley) in which Valence had lost an expensive destrier⁵ and others of his party (including Philip Mowbray and Thomas Randolph) had also lost horses amounting in total to a value of some £477. Duncan⁶ reasonably suggests that Mowbray's pursuit force may have been inadequate, mainly footmen led by a few horsed knights, and this would help to explain Douglas's success. If the main English force was still in Renfrewshire after the earlier action, this may account for Mowbray circling back north instead of making for the English-garrisoned castle at Ayr.

Väthjunker's⁷ interpretation of this episode is somewhat confusing. Accepting first that Douglas did not go to Galloway with the king at this time, she later places the incident in Galloway, though there is no evidence to suggest that both Douglas and Mowbray were there simultaneously over this period. She appears to conclude that there is no factual basis for this episode, as it is unrecorded by other contemporary sources.

Whatever alternative interpretation is chosen for this episode, it is absolutely consistent with the king's military tactics at the time, and with Douglas's own methods. Geographically, it places Douglas close to the forest of Paisley (where we know he was located on 14 September). Barbour's mistaken implication is that this episode took place before the battle of Loudoun Hill (10 May 1307, see next episode). Accordingly, it is assessed as plausible, with a rating of 1.

Episode 8.2: The battle of Loudoun Hill (107-390)

Gray⁸ notes that the king had assembled his adherents in Carrick. De Valence marched against him when he heard of this. King Robert defeated de Valence at Loudoun, and Guisborough confirms this⁹. Documentary evidence is more

⁵ CDS V: 655.

⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 290n.

⁷ Väthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 38-41, 180-81.

⁸ *Scalacronica*, p. 34.

⁹ Guisborough, p. 378.

circumstantial, but persuasive. De Valence is confirmed as Guardian of Scotland for Longshanks at this time¹⁰. The famous letter¹¹ written at Forfar on 15 May to ‘some high official’ observes that the king has had much success, that he has destroyed all Longshanks power in Scotland, and that the English force ‘is in retreat to its own country not to return’. De Valence writes, perhaps to Sir James Dalilegh, from Bothwell on 1 June about the repair of Ayr castle and paying 300 soldiers under earl Patrick to garrison it¹². A letter¹³ written at Carlisle on 15 May notes that Longshanks is enraged that de Valence and his force had retreated before ‘King Hobbe’. This letter also underlines the growing disorganisation of the English forces remaining in Scotland.

Duncan¹⁴ argues that de Valence’s force came from Ayr, based on his identification of little Loudoun. This, he says, may be equated with Over Loudoun on Blaeu’s (late 16th century) map of Cunningham¹⁵. It is five miles west of Loudoun Hill, and would certainly allow the king to scout the road from Ayr. This location would, however, give him a difficult and long march back to Loudoun Hill before the arrival of the English. Perhaps Duncan overlooked ‘Little Loudon’, also marked on the Blaeu map, less than one mile from Loudoun Hill, from whence approaches from both Ayr and Bothwell could be scouted. Although there is no evidence for the tactical detail of the battle, cartographic and documentary evidence strongly supports Barbour’s account of this episode, as well as the date he suggests for it (10 May). It may therefore be rated 6, strongly confirmed.

¹⁰ CDS: II: 1938, 1942.

¹¹ CDS: II: 1926.

¹² CDS: II: 1935.

¹³ CDS: II: 1979.

¹⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 300.

¹⁵ Store, Jeffrey, *Illustrated Map of Scotland from Blaeu’s Atlas Novus of the 17th Century*, London, 1991, plate 17.

Episode 8.3: The king goes over the Mounth (391-415)

Bower¹⁶ observes that, after action in Carrick, King Robert took his men over the mountains to Inverness. He also identifies the king's enemies at this time: Sir John Comyn earl of Buchan, and Sir John Mowbray. Documentary evidence shows Comyn as persistently sympathetic to, or acting with, the English at this period¹⁷. The same is true of Sir David Brechin¹⁸ and Sir John Mowbray¹⁹. There is also documentary identification of some who acted against the English: Sir Gilbert Hay²⁰, the earl of Lennox²¹, and Sir Robert Boyd²². The letter of Duncan of Fren draught to Caernarfon confirms the king's movement to Inverness²³. Duncan²⁴ proposes rationally that the movement over the mounth took place in mid-September; if so, it may have been just after the king heard of Douglas's success at Edirford. Thus, this episode is strongly confirmed and is rated at 6.

Episode 8.4: Third attack of Douglas castle (416-520)

Given the efficiency of the king and Sir Edward Bruce in demolishing castles beyond the possibility of short-term recovery, it is extraordinary that this is James Douglas's third bite at his own. Perhaps he was reluctant to put his own property too far beyond use. Vãthjunker²⁵ suggests a reasonable alternative, that he was trying to keep open the option of making peace with the English. According to the analysis in Chapter 8, the same sub-author wrote of all three attacks on Douglas Castle, so the possibility of confusion of one or two episodes into three is reduced. Duncan²⁶ has noted a mistaken chronology in the three attacks, but more argumentatively suggests

¹⁶ *Scalacronica*, XII, 12.

¹⁷ CDS: II: 378, 424, 635, 672, 839, 888, 920, 921, 1455, 1535, 1538, 1541, 1574, 1691, 1717, 1835, 1847, 1870.

¹⁸ CDS: II: 883, 1455, 1574, 1670, 1876, 1961.

¹⁹ CDS: II: 1691, 1722, 1726, 1746, 1868, 1938, 1961.

²⁰ CDS: II: 1782, 1787. Sir Gilbert Hay was confirmed as Constable of Scotland on 20 November 1314, see *Charta at Sigilla Regum Comitum et Procedum Scotiae*.

²¹ CDS: II: 1489.

²² CDS: II: 1829.

²³ *SHR*: 44, pp. 57-59.

²⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 310n.

²⁵ Vãthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 39-40.

²⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 312n.

that Barbour departed from a correct sequence in his source to engage in a literary effect.

Perhaps Douglas's ineffectiveness in destroying castles is the reason for the three attacks. It may also explain why the king sent Sir Edward Bruce to demolish Roxburgh after Douglas took it in February 1314. There is no record of a Sir John Webiton. Vāthjunker²⁷ dismisses this episode as "unsubstantiated", and included by Barbour merely to illustrate Douglas as a well-prepared fighter focused only on success. Despite such difficulties, this episode is internally consistent within the poem, and reflects Douglas's perseverance and respect for what was rightfully his. Nevertheless, having regard to Vāthjunker's conclusion if not her reasoning, this episode must be rated as 1 (plausible).

Episode 9.1: Manoeuvring in Buchan (1-62; 101-240)

Alexander Fraser, noted by Thomas Gray as a supporter of the king²⁸, later became chamberlain, and Simon was appointed sheriff of the Mearns²⁹. King Robert's sickness is confirmed by Fren draught's letter³⁰ and Bower³¹, who also confirms the detail that the king was carried in a litter. Both sources also support Slioch as the scene of action. Duncan³² rationally disputes Barbour's sequence of events, appealing to both Fren draught and Bower. However, Barbour's sequence may be validly interpreted alongside these sources. Immediately prior to these events, the king had spent two days in sickness at Banff³³. If he had news there that Buchan had gathered a force, he would have moved towards Buchan, probably by way of Strathbogie, Slioch and Inverurie where, according to Barbour his sickness returned more seriously. Having just passed through the Slioch area, Edward Bruce may well have identified a defensive position, where they could lie up till the king

²⁷ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 181.

²⁸ *Scalacronica*, p. 49.

²⁹ *Scots Peerage*, 7, pp. 425-428.

³⁰ *SHR*: 44, pp. 57-59.

³¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 13.

³² Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 318-319.

³³ *SHR*: 44, pp. 57-59.

recovered. Fren draught would be unlikely to report the king's detailed itinerary to Caernarfon, but concentrate on where the opposing forces ended up after the king left Fren draught's immediate vicinity. Fren draught also confirms Barbour's detail of the king's force protected by woodland, as well as its withdrawal to Strathbogie. Fren draught and Bower confirm Barbour's timing of this episode (after Martinmas). Finally, the earl of Ross's letter to Caernarfon broadly confirms the king's activity in the region, which may be tentatively dated to October/November 1307.

This episode has good documentary and chronicle support. Although Barbour's version is one of the two possible interpretations of tactical movement, much of Duncan's alternative and its consequences are very similar to the argument presented here. Accordingly, the episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed, with a rating of 6.

Episode 9.2: The battle of Old Meldrum (241-294)

Bower confirms a battle at Inverurie between a still sick king and a larger force led by Buchan and Mowbray³⁴. Buchan's defeated force was pushed as far as Fyvie, perhaps passing through Old Meldrum (Duri). For a force raised in Buchan, approach to Inverurie would most likely be via Fyvie and Old Meldrum, where Barbour locates it before the battle. Caernarfon appointed Buchan as Keeper of Galloway and Mowbray as Keeper of Annandale³⁵. Buchan died in 1308³⁶. It is unlikely that Sir David Brechin was taken so soon after the battle as Barbour seems to imply, though he did spend some time in the king's service³⁷. Duncan³⁸ regards Brechin as "no strong adherent" of the king, and his discussion broadly regards the Barbour version of the battle and its consequences as valid.

³⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 17.

³⁵ CDS: III: 47.

³⁶ CDS: III: 59.

³⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XIII; *Scots Peerage*, 2, pp. 218-219.

³⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 332-3n.

Bower implies a date of 23 May 1308 for the battle³⁹. This is supported by documentary evidence in which Caernarfon encourages Buchan, Mowbray and Fren draught to continue their work north of the Forth, and thanks Brechin for his faithful service⁴⁰ (dated May 29, 1308). Thus, Barbour's dating of the battle is wrong, though he is well corroborated in many other details. Accordingly this episode may be rated at 6 (strongly confirmed).

Episode 9.3: The hership of Buchan (295-307)

Bower confirms the destruction by force of the earldom of Buchan⁴¹. An entry in Bain⁴² makes it clear that the English knew and accepted that they had lost all power and influence in the north of Scotland by June 1308. Indeed, in this memorandum, the earl of Buchan is assigned to a new task as warden of Annandale, something he would not have taken on at this dangerous time unless he had been completely expelled from his own possessions by that date. In the campaign against the earl of Ross, a number of men who had previously been Longshanks's sheriffs in the north were with the king⁴³. This, together with the settlement with the earl of Ross and the permanent removal of the earl of Buchan from his lands, suggests that Barbour was right to claim all Scotland beyond the Mounth for inclusion in the king's peace. This episode may then be assessed as confirmed, with a rating of 5.

Episode 9.4: The fall of Forfar Castle (308-324)

Forfar was still possessed by the English on 15 May 1307⁴⁴. By the end of summer 1308, Banff was the only castle beyond the Mounth still in English hands⁴⁵. Thus, Forfar had fallen at around the time indicated by Barbour. *Holyrood*⁴⁶ gives

³⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 17.

⁴⁰ CDS: III: 43.

⁴¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 17.

⁴² CDS: III: 47.

⁴³ *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, I, 477.

⁴⁴ CDS II: 1926.

⁴⁵ *Rotuli Scotiae*, I, 63.

⁴⁶ *Chronicle of Holyrood*, p. 179.

that date of capture as 25 December 1308. It also allows us to ascertain a fairly accurate time of day. According to the chronicle, the castle was taken at vespers, i.e. before 6 p.m. Barbour's account implies an attack after dark ("all prevely"). Thus we may identify an interval between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. There is no record of Philip the forester. The Platan was a hunting forest near Forfar. This is a minor episode that fits only loosely within the context of the times (Barbour is about to jump three years to the siege of Perth). It adds little to the context, except to emphasise again that the king has help and support outside the nobility. Accordingly, it is rated at 1 (plausible).

Episode 9.5: The fall of Perth (325-476)

Barbour's narrative gives the impression that the siege of Perth took place immediately after the fall of Forfar castle, but it occurred in January 1312/13, about four years later. Thus, this episode is well out of time sequence within Barbour's overall narrative. The king was at Perth on 14 October 1308, giving a mandate to his sheriffs of Forfar⁴⁷. Duncan assumes that this implies an earlier threat to Perth⁴⁸ but, of his normal military companions, only Gilbert Hay was present to witness the mandate. Thus, the visit was more likely to have been for administrative purposes than as an attack on the English garrison.

*Holyrood*⁴⁹ gives the date as 7 January 1313. Bower gives the date as 8 January, as well as confirming many of the details⁵⁰: the common people of the town were granted clemency; the defences were cast down; the fortified town was surrounded on three sides by a moat (with the river Tay on the fourth side); ladders and portable bridges were built for the assault; the king carries a ladder to the assault; the town was plundered; and William Oliphant was the keeper. There is no mention of Muschet or the French knight.

⁴⁷ *RRS* V: 4.

⁴⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 334n.

⁴⁹ *Chronicle of Holyrood*, p. 179.

⁵⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 18.

*Lanercost*⁵¹ also gives the date as 8 January 1313, confirms that the king led the attack with ladders, and that Oliphant was the keeper. According to this source, the king freed the English defenders, but killed the Scots among them. Gray⁵² notes, idiosyncratically, that the earl of Atholl captured Perth for the king from William Oliphant, who afterwards served the king.

There is some documentary evidence that Perth was strongly guarded and often reinforced⁵³, and that strenuous efforts were made to maintain the flow of provisions to the garrison⁵⁴. Thus, despite one observation from Gray, there is very substantial support for Barbour's version of this episode. Even though it is misplaced in time, it should be rated as 6 (strongly confirmed).

Episode 9.6: Edward Bruce in Galloway (477-514)

An undated document, put at June 1308 by Bain, records Caernarfon making appointments in Scotland and trying (perhaps without effort) to influence events there⁵⁵. He says he means to go to Scotland, but not "so soon as he thought". Appointment of wardens in Annandale, Galloway and Carrick suggests disorder in these areas. It is unclear from this document whether Umfraville is appointed warden of Carrick, or whether Buchan, Mowbray and Umfraville are appointed joint wardens of Annandale, Galloway and Carrick. In either case, it seems that Umfraville was in some position of authority in southwest Scotland at the time. Edward Bruce was said to be there. *Lanercost*⁵⁶ notes that Edward Bruce was active in Galloway in late 1307/1308, perhaps accompanied by the king. *Lanercost* is unlikely to be correct in this point, as other strong evidence puts King Robert in northeast Scotland at this time. However, *Lanercost* continues, by mid 1308, Edward Bruce was sweeping all before him in Galloway, accompanied by Alexander

⁵¹ *Lanercost*, p. 202.

⁵² *Scalacronica*, p. 52.

⁵³ CDS: III: 116, 173.

⁵⁴ CDS: III: 149.

⁵⁵ CDS: III: 47.

⁵⁶ *Lanercost*, pp. 185, 187.

Lindsay, Robert Boyle and James Douglas. Thus, the chronicle evidence confirms the somewhat indistinct indications from documents, and this episode may be rated as 5 (confirmed).

Episode 9.7: The battle of the river Cree (515-562)

Bower⁵⁷ describes a battle at the river Dee around this time. Nicholson⁵⁸ accepts that the Dee and Cree battles were one and the same, but Duncan disputes this⁵⁹. The latter suggests that Barbour took the name of the river from a lost Umfraville manuscript, and it is likely to be correct. However, the Umfraville source is just as likely to be wrong about the river name. Note that Bower's evidence is also internally inconsistent. In the prose version he identifies the Edward Bruce's opponent as "Donaldus de Ilez"; in the verse chronicle Bruce is allied to "ab Yl veniens Dovenaldus". Whether Donald of the Isles (tentatively identified by Watt as Donald McCan⁶⁰) was a different person from Donald of Islay cannot now be determined, but it does underline the possibility of some confusion by Bower (or Fordun) over his sources. The pursuit to Buittle castle (which had been the Balliol nerve centre in southwest Scotland) lends weight to the river Dee as the location of the battle. Buittle is five miles from the Dee, a distance over which pursuit may well be evaded. It is 27 miles from the Cree to Buittle; avoidance of pursuit is more difficult to credit in this scenario. Neither Umfraville nor St. John is mentioned in Bower.

It is likely that a battle did take place in Galloway at this time, but the rating of the episode depends on the relative accuracy of Barbour's version. It seems appropriate to rate this episode as 3 (weak support), a verdict with which Duncan's discussion⁶¹ appears to agree.

⁵⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 17.

⁵⁸ Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1978, p. 78.

⁵⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 346-7n.

⁶⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 17, note 54 on p. 444.

⁶¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 346-7n.

Episode 9.8: Sir Edward Bruce attacks Aymer St. John (546-676)

Barrow (in *Robert Bruce*) does not mention this episode so, presumably, he gives it no credence. Duncan (*The Bruce*) makes no comment about the action. At first sight, this episode might seem unlikely, but it is feasible if the English were riding in column (as is probable). The elements of surprise followed by confusion would give the Scots an advantage. The action is consistent with what we know of Sir Edward Bruce, it fits the context, and adds to the context. It is, perhaps, given additional credibility by the avowed witness of Sir Alan Cathcart⁶² and the military slant he lends to the details: the repeated cavalry charges, the references to distance measured by arrow-flights, and assessment of morale. Sir Edward Bruce had become lord of Galloway by March 1309⁶³, so it is likely that he had subdued Galloway by that time and taken all but the main fortresses. The comparisons of Sir Edward with the king fit what we know of their characteristics. Thus, this episode may be assessed as plausible (rating of 1).

Episode 9.9: Douglas takes Randolph to the king (677-762)

The Water of Lyne runs into the Tweed. Alexander Stewart was the son of Sir John Stewart, who fought and died with Wallace at Falkirk. After Methven, Randolph was put into Sir Adam Gordon's care at Inverkip Castle⁶⁴. Sir Adam came over to the king's side after Bannockburn⁶⁵, probably at the same time as his lord, the earl of Dunbar⁶⁶. There is no other version of, or any information about, Randolph's reversion to the king's side. Barbour seems to place the incident correctly in time and plausibly in perspective. Duncan⁶⁷ rationally places this event in the early summer of 1308, indicating that Barbour is rather out of sequence yet again.

⁶² *SP*, volume 2, pp. 504-596.

⁶³ *APS*: I: p. 289.

⁶⁴ *CDS*: II: 1807.

⁶⁵ *RRS*: V: 490.

⁶⁶ *CDS*: III: 392.

⁶⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 354*n*.

The matter of Randolph and the king, as related by Barbour, has the feeling of reality about it. Having given his loyalty to Caernarfon, Randolph is difficult to capture. Being still youthful and knightly, he scorns the tactics that have brought the king success since the disaster of Methven, the last time he fought a battle in conformity with Randolph's views. There is no instant reconciliation. The king, no doubt stung by Randolph's criticism, reacted in the normal way when his status and self-view were attacked – he used his authority to silence Randolph and give him time to reconsider. The fact that Douglas captured Randolph may also go some way to explaining their subsequent friendly rivalry – never problematic but always present. Duncan⁶⁸ notes that Randolph had been reconciled with the king by March 1309, when he appeared at Parliament as lord of Nithsdale, but it was only in April 1312 that he was included among witnesses to the king's charters⁶⁹. This whole episode may be assessed as highly plausible, and rated at 2.

Episode 10.1: The battle of Ben Cruachan (1-135)

Duncan⁷⁰ suggested in 1997 that the battle took place between Ben Cruachan and Loch Etive, but withdrew this notion after an exchange of views with Barrow⁷¹. John of Lorn's letter to Caernarfon⁷², dated by Bain after 11 March 1308-9, relates how the king approached his territories with 10,000 or 15,000 men (probably on his way to northeast Scotland via Inverlochy). Lorn also notes that he is himself sick at the time of writing. This may account for his being on a galley during the action against the king, rather than leading his men in person. Bower ascribes King Robert's victory to August 1308⁷³. He confirms the capture of Dunstaffnage, but observes that it was Sir Alexander of Lorn who refused to come into the king's peace. Sir William

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 358n.

⁶⁹ *RRS*: V: 19.

⁷⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 361-362n.

⁷¹ Barrow, G.W.S., The battle between John MacDougall of Lorn and Robert Bruce in 1308 or 1309, *West Highland Notes and Queries*, Series 2, No. 19.

Duncan, A.A.M., The battles of Ben Cruachan, 1308, *West Highland Notes and Queries*, Series 2, No. 20, August 1999.

⁷² *CDS*: III: 80.

⁷³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 18.

Wiseman had been active on King Robert's behalf in northeast Scotland just preceding the attack on Argyll⁷⁴. He was also with the king at Dunfermline on 20 March 1309⁷⁵. There is no evidence to suggest that Sir Andrew Craig was with the king at this time, as Barbour would have it. Nor do we have any detail of how James Douglas came to be with the king. The geographical details are discussed by Duncan and Barrow⁷⁶, and seem to agree broadly with Barbour's description. We know that one of the king's charters is dated at Perth on 14 October 1308⁷⁷, so Barbour may well be accurate in claiming that he returned to Perth after taking Dunstaffnage castle. We may therefore assign this episode a rating of 4 (supported).

Episode 10.2: The fall of Linlithgow peel (136-257)

Longshanks built Linlithgow peel in 1302⁷⁸. It was still garrisoned by the English as late as August 1313⁷⁹, but nothing further is heard beyond that, presumably because it was taken, as Barbour relates. There is no evidence about the existence of William Bunnock, or any of Barbour's other circumstantial details. Duncan⁸⁰ suggests that this episode may have been borrowed from the taking of Edinburgh castle in 1341, citing the attendance of one "William Bullock who was then the king of Scotland's sworn man", and certain other circumstantial similarities. It is equally likely that the report of the Edinburgh incident was borrowed from Linlithgow or from Barbour's description. Given that there is some corroboration, we may rate this episode at 3 (weak support).

Episode 10.3: Randolph becomes the king's man (258-304)

Randolph must have made amends with the king fairly soon after his capture, and certainly by the parliament of March 1309, where he attended as lord of

⁷⁴ SHR: 44, pp. 57-59.

⁷⁵ RRS: V: 6.

⁷⁶ See note 71 above.

⁷⁷ RRS, V, p. 293.

⁷⁸ CDS: II: 1267, 1321.

⁷⁹ CDS: III: 330.

⁸⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 368*n*.

Nithsdale⁸¹. He was appointed earl of Moray between April and October 1312⁸². The description of Moray is fairly detached, and gives the feel of an eyewitness account. It seems that Barbour either saw Moray before his death or had a good account of him. This episode, precisely in context with Episode 9.9, and broadly in context with the developing narrative, is rated at 2 (highly plausible), a conclusion with which Duncan appears to agree⁸³.

Episode 10.4: Moray takes Edinburgh castle (305-340; 511-707; 761-792)

Bower⁸⁴ puts the date of the fall of Edinburgh castle at 14 March 1313/14, and corroborates Barbour's chronology that Roxburgh fell first. He confirms that Moray was in command, that ladders were used, that the castle was taken at night, and after a struggle, and that the king cast down the castle afterwards. *Holyrood*⁸⁵ agrees with Bower's date, though *Gesta*⁸⁶ (probably mistakenly, as it is run together with the taking of Roxburgh) puts the date at 19 February. *Vita*⁸⁷ also confirms the fall of Edinburgh castle, and that a treacherous Gascon, Piers Lubaud, governed it. According to *Vita*, Lubaud betrayed the castle because he was an adherent of the king's. *Lanercost*⁸⁸ gives a fairly full description of the castle's capture, following the fall of Roxburgh, through a night assault via the castle rock, and using ladders to scale the wall. After the resistance had been quelled, the castle was cast down. Gray⁸⁹ also relates how the castle was captured and cast down, that the Gascon Piers Lubaud had been its sheriff, though secretly in the service of the king. The assault took place via the castle rock. Documentary evidence is also available for Lubaud's

⁸¹ *APS*: I: 289.

⁸² *RRS*: V: 378-379, 389; *Lindores Charters*, pp. 277-8.

⁸³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 372-374n.

⁸⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 19.

⁸⁵ *Holyrood*, p. 180.

⁸⁶ *Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan*, p. 45.

⁸⁷ *Vita*, p. 48.

⁸⁸ *Lanercost*, p. 204.

⁸⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 51.

governorship⁹⁰. Lubaud did, indeed, become the king's man, and there is documentary evidence⁹¹ for his eventual estrangement from Robert I by 8 March 1316. Though there is no other record of William Francis and the part he played, this episode must be assessed as strongly supported, and rated at 6.

Episode 10.5: Douglas takes Roxburgh castle (341-510)

Both *Holyrood*⁹² and *Gesta*⁹³ give the date as 19 February 1313-14. Bower⁹⁴ confirms Barbour's date (19 February) for the capture of the castle by Douglas after a struggle with the defenders, and that the castle was demolished afterwards. *Vita*⁹⁵ also speaks of a night attack led by James Douglas, a stealthy approach, the use of ladders, and a struggle before the castle was taken. *Lanercost*⁹⁶ puts the capture of Roxburgh at the beginning of Lent, mentions the use of cunning and the deployment of ladders. It confirms de Fiennes as the castle warden, and that the garrison withdrew to one tower that was taken shortly afterwards. The castle was subsequently demolished. Gray⁹⁷ confirms Barbour's date, Douglas's leadership, and that de Fiennes was the warden. It adds the further detail that an arrow killed de Fiennes while he was defending the great tower. The castle was dismantled afterwards. No other source mentions Simon of Ledhouse. That Jedburgh castle held out until 1314, and perhaps until near the end of that year, is suggested by documentary evidence⁹⁸. On January 25 1314-15, castle warden William Prendergast was pardoned of all offences laid against him. On July 22 1316, Caernarfon compensated Sir Maurice Berkeley for horses lost at Jedburgh and other places in 1314 and 1315. Jedburgh was clearly in Scottish possession by the end of 1321⁹⁹.

⁹⁰ CDS: III: 254, 330.

⁹¹ *RRS*: V: 84.

⁹² *Holyrood*, p. 196.

⁹³ *Gesta*, p. 45.

⁹⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 19.

⁹⁵ *Vita*, p. 48.

⁹⁶ *Lanercost*, p. 204.

⁹⁷ *Scalacronica*, p. 51.

⁹⁸ CDS: III: 418, 494.

⁹⁹ CDS: III: 746.

Duncan¹⁰⁰ believes that Douglas undertook this attack on his own initiative, but there is no supporting evidence for this view. Edward Bruce was probably sent to Roxburgh to oversee its demolition, an exercise in which he had become expert (see next episode). Våthjunker¹⁰¹ accepts (“for once”) the main line of Barbour’s version but notes the interesting interpretation that Barbour tends to play up Simon of Ledhouse as the hero rather than Douglas. She is prepared to accept Barbour’s story about Simon, but not the “possibly apocryphal” story about the disguise as cattle; no evidence for or against either is led.

Thus, although other sources sometimes disagree on points of detail, there is very strong corroboration for Barbour’s version of this episode, and it is rated as 6.

Episode 10.6: Edward Bruce’s campaign on castles (793-809)

Documentary evidence¹⁰² confirms that castles at Dumfries, Buittle and Caerlaverock were under attack from mid 1312. Dumfries had surrendered by 7 February 1313. The activity was ascribed to the king, but this may be a form of words used by document compilers. It is probable that Sir Edward Bruce was involved, and possible that he was the main actor (in the king’s name). However, Bower¹⁰³ also notes that the king captured and demolished Buittle, Dumfries, Dalswinton and many other castles in 1312. There is no evidence that directly links Edward Bruce with the taking of castles, though he may well have been involved. Duncan¹⁰⁴ records a similar view and suggests that Edward Bruce was with the king in Galloway, working under him as a sub-commander, though there is no documentary evidence that identifies his presence. This episode may only be rated as 2, highly plausible, despite the existence of some indirect documentary and chronicle corroboration.

¹⁰⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 378n.

¹⁰¹ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 49-50, 184-85.

¹⁰² CDS: III: 279, 304.

¹⁰³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 400n.

Episode 10.7: Edward Bruce and Stirling castle (810-830)

Bower¹⁰⁵ notes that Sir Edward Bruce and governor Sir Philip Mowbray were indeed, the protagonists at Stirling, and they agreed the castle would be handed over to the Scots a year later if it was not relieved by an appointed date. Perhaps the strong confirmation has to be discounted somewhat since, at this point, Bower speaks of Barbour's work, and may have used it as his own source.

“For an account of the marvellous fashion and glorious form of the victory in that battle see the book about the said lord King Robert which the archdeacon of Aberdeen composed in the mother tongue.”

On the other hand, this would suggest that he regarded Barbour's version of this episode as trustworthy. Bower's details are different from Barbour's; e.g. he gives Sir John of Brittany as one of the English lords captured at Bannockburn, not recorded in *The Bruce*. On balance, as discussed in Chapter 3, it is more likely that Barbour and Bower used common sources. *Vita*¹⁰⁶ states that the king was responsible for the siege. It confirms that, due to shortage of provisions, an agreement was made that the castle would be given up to the Scots if Caernarfon did not relieve it. Midsummer (1314, implied) was the assigned term date to this agreement. Gray¹⁰⁷ confirms the governor Mowbray agreed to surrender the castle to the king unless Caernarfon relieved it by the following midsummer. This occurred after the fall of Perth in January 1313, and Gray seems to imply that the agreement was made (with the king) in mid-year 1313, to be effective at Midsummer 1314.

Duncan¹⁰⁸ disagrees with Barbour's version, and especially his chronology, but does not consider other evidence cited above. He believes that Caernarfon heard of the ultimatum from Mowbray on 26-27 May 1314 at Newminster, and that the notice was so short that “incredulous later writers extended it to a whole year....”. Duncan's argument is not particularly convincing, and he accepts that other

¹⁰⁵ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Vita*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁰⁷ *Scalacronica*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 402n.

historians have overwhelmingly accepted Barbour's chronology. He suggests that the siege of Stirling began after the fall of Edinburgh and Roxburgh, perhaps because it follows those incidents in Barbour. However, the latter makes no claim to this specific chronology; instead, he is quite vague about timing:

In this tyme that thir jupertys
Off thir castillis that I devis
War eschevyt sa hardely,

Because he can find no examples of agreements to surrender castles of more than a few months, Duncan is disinclined to believe Barbour's period of (perhaps) fifteen months. This view does not take into consideration the overwhelming strategic importance of Stirling, as well as its emotional value to Caernarfon (its siege and capture was his father's last major achievement in Scotland). Duncan also feels that the documentary sequence of Caernarfon's invasion preparations (November 1313, March-April 1314, 27 May 1314) do not fit with Barbour's record. In fact, they fit it very well.

In view of the evidence developed above, this episode must be assessed as confirmed, and rated at 5.

Episode 11.1: Caernarfon's response to the Stirling agreement (1-30; 69-210)

*Annales Londonienses*¹⁰⁹ carries notice of Caernarfon's expedition into Scotland after Easter (supported in this detail by *Annales Paulini*¹¹⁰), mustering at Berwick. *Vita*¹¹¹ confirms Mowbray's visit to England with news of the truce, and his advice about a relieving force. It tells of the wide support mustered, including Gloucester, Hereford, de Valence, Clifford, Despenser and many other barons. It also notes that "a great multitude" of carts and baggage wagons were employed, enough to spread over 20 leagues if positioned end to end. After a stop at Berwick to organise his

¹⁰⁹ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 230.

¹¹⁰ *Annales Paulini*, p. 275.

¹¹¹ *Vita*, pp. 49-51.

forces, Caernarfon set out for Stirling six or seven days before the agreed deadline. He had more than 2000 cavalry and “a numerous crowd of infantry”. It was thought to be the most powerful army ever to have left England, and more than sufficient to defeat any strength the Scots could muster. Finally, *Vita* confirms that Gloucester and Hereford were in command of the vanguard.

*Lanercost*¹¹² relates how Caernarfon approached Scotland about 26 May with a force that included Gloucester, Hereford, de Valence, Clifford, Umfraville, Sir Henry de Beaumont, Sir Pain Typtoft, Sir Edward Mauley, the earl of Angus, Sir John Comyn (son of the Red Comyn) and many other barons and knights. Caernarfon set out for Stirling before 24 June.

Gray¹¹³ reports Caernarfon’s expedition to Scotland to relieve Stirling castle accompanied by Gloucester, Hereford, Clifford, de Beaumont, d’Argentin and a large host. Bower¹¹⁴, via the Baston poem, records the presence of four Germans in the English force. Though Caernarfon had close links with all the other countries and regions mentioned by Barbour, there is no documentary evidence that support was drawn from them, except an indirect note¹¹⁵ that John of Lorn was sent to Ireland on Caernarfon’s (unspecified) business between 3 June 1313 and 14 March 1313/14. Duncan¹¹⁶ accepts that there may have been some Gascons, but no other foreigners, with Caernarfon; he also discounts the presence of the count of Hainault, but there is neither evidence for this or for Barbour’s claim that the count was in attendance. There is strong documentary evidence¹¹⁷ that Caernarfon was at Berwick at a time that fits Barbour’s version (12-14 June), and he was on the way to Edinburgh (at Soutra) by 18 June. There is also much documentary evidence¹¹⁸ that many Scots were active in Caernarfon’s service at the time. These included David Brechin, Dougal Macdowall, John Comyn, David earl of Atholl, Adam Gordon, Ivo of Argyll,

¹¹² *Lanercost*, pp. 206-207.

¹¹³ *Scalacronica*, pp. 52-56.

¹¹⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

¹¹⁵ CDS: III: 355.

¹¹⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 408n.

¹¹⁷ CDS: III: 361, 362, 363, 365.

¹¹⁸ CDS: III: 273, 278, 282, 283, 293, 299, 302, 303, 320, 337, 338, 341, 344, 348, 355.

Donald of Mar, Alexander de Abernethy, John of Lorn, Ingram de Umfraville, David de Graham, Thomas de Balliol, Patrick earl of March, Roger Mowbray and Robert de Umfraville earl of Angus. Finally, there is Caernarfon's dramatic letter¹¹⁹ of August 1313 instructing his Keeper of the Great Seal to intercede on behalf of Sir Giles d'Argentin, held in prison in Salonica in August 1313. The intercession was clearly successful, as d'Argentin duly appeared in time for the battle of Bannockburn.

Barbour's numbers are clearly wrong, by an order of magnitude on some cases. Morris¹²⁰ developed an estimate for Caernarfon's force that has become widely accepted. He suggests a figure of around 15,000 infantry and 2,500 heavy cavalry. Note that the latter is close to Barbour's figure of 3,000. There is little confirmation about how the English force was organised, or about its geographical origin. Apart from these aspects, much of Barbour's scenario appears to be verifiable, and this episode should be assessed as confirmed (rated as 5).

Episode 11.2: The king's response to the Stirling deal (31-58)

There must have been some exchange between the brothers, but Barbour's version seems to err on the "chivalrous" side. Duncan¹²¹ has pointed out the difficulties he sees with Sir Edward's activities and itinerary at this time. He may over-complicate the issue somewhat as a by-product of his attempt to prove that the agreement with Mowbray was made in Lent 1314. However, he indicates indirectly how difficult it might have been for Sir Edward to have such a detailed discussion with the king at this time. Thus, the episode is as plausible (rated at 1).

¹¹⁹ CDS: III: 329.

¹²⁰ Morris, J.E., *Bannockburn*, 1914, pp. 22-41.

¹²¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 406n.

Episode 11.3: The king prepares for Bannockburn (211-354)

Once again, Barbour is adrift, probably by an order of magnitude, on numbers. However, Bower¹²² confirms that the Scots army was much the smaller of the two. Gray¹²³ notes that the Scots were blocking the narrow roads in the forest (New Park?), and that Moray was one of the king's commanders. *Lanercost*¹²⁴ puts the Scots in the Torwood, but this may be a mistaken northward extension of the Torwood to include the New Park. *Vita*¹²⁵ speaks of the Scots being in "a certain wood" near Stirling, and names James Douglas as one of the king's commanders. There is no mention in the sources of the organisation of the Scots army.

As noted above, English sources agree that Moray and Douglas were two of the king's commanders, though they disagree on who commanded the vanguard. Gray¹²⁶ notes, in addition, that the Scots arranged for battle in "the Park", and blocking its narrow roads. Våthjunker¹²⁷ is convinced, on the basis of English chronicle evidence, that the Scots were in three divisions rather than four. This discussion relates only to the second day of the battle. Even on the second day, however, the argument is weak as the king's (fourth) division only joined the action in the heart of the battle. In such circumstances, it could be argued, Scottish sources may well be more trustworthy¹²⁸.

Though there is no corroboration of Walter Stewart's presence, Duncan¹²⁹ is prepared to accept it, and he also agrees with Våthjunker's notion of three Scots divisions, owing to the unanimity of the English chronicles¹³⁰. His view on the organisation of the Scots army is, however, not well conceived. In drawing up his army in the Torwood, the king makes the following dispositions (XI, 347-54):

¹²² *Scotichronicon*, XII, p. 20.

¹²³ *Scalacronica*, p. 53.

¹²⁴ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

¹²⁵ *Vita*, p. 51.

¹²⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 53.

¹²⁷ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 52-55.

¹²⁸ Cf. Hume, *History of England*, p. 243.

¹²⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 416n.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 420n.

He said the rerward he wald ma
 And evyn forrouth him suld ga
 The vaward, and on ather hand
 The tother bataillis suld be gangand
 Besid on sid a littil space,
 And the king that behind thaim was
 Suld se quar thar war mast myster
 And releve thar with his baner.

Duncan¹³¹ claims that this disposition is for battle, and not appropriate for the move from the Torwood to the New Park. He also claims it is contradicted at lines 455-60 of Book XI:

And syne his broder Schyr Edward
 And young Walter alsua Steward
 And the lord of Douglas alsua
 With thar mengne guld tent suld ta
 Quhilk of thaim had of help myster
 And help with thaim that with him wer.

It appears that Duncan is misguided in his surmise. The king would take up the rearguard on the march to the New Park, thus protecting his army from the most obvious direction of English attack. He would also be well placed to assist his right and left wings, if either was subject to a flank attack by the English during the move to the New Park. In the New Park, however, the situation was different. The most obvious directions for the English attack would not be up the steep slope to the east of the Park, but directly on the king's division at the entry and/or on Randolph's division at St. Ninian's. The other two divisions would be drawn up first, to guard the slope and second, to give assistance in the event of English attacks on the king's rearguard division (Edward Bruce) or on Randolph's vanguard (Douglas/Stewart). Thus, Barbour's disposition makes much more tactical sense than Duncan's version. It also clarifies why the Scots needed four divisions, at least on the first day of the battle.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 422n.

Leaving the question of numbers aside, some of Barbour's details are confused, but none are refuted, though the *Lanercost* reference to the Torwood should be remembered. In addition, though there is nothing in the sources to contradict Barbour's version of the king's dispositions for battle, the supportive evidence is not strong either (despite the foregoing discussion, indicating that Barbour's version is more satisfactory than Duncan's). Accordingly, this episode should be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 11.4: Saturday 23 June (355-504)

Bower¹³² relates how pits were dug, sharp sticks inserted, and they were covered over so that they were disguised. Baston's poem also speaks of trenches set with stakes; these pits were dug by the "ordinary folk" to block the English cavalry¹³³. As noted above (see footnote 120), Gray confirms that the Scots army was arranged in "the Park", and that the English were, at one point, on a road "through the wood"¹³⁴. *Vita*¹³⁵ also speaks of Scots being "in the wood".

*Holyrood*¹³⁶ gives the date as 23-24 June 1314, while *Annales Paulini*¹³⁷ gives only the feast of St John the Baptist (24 June). *Flores Historiarum*¹³⁸ follows suit and adds the interesting detail that "the Lord allowed the Scots to prevail". Bower¹³⁹ confirms the date, the saying of Mass and the hearing of confessions. He adds that all took communion, which would support Barbour's contention of fasting. As noted previously, there is support for the existence of the pits. In addition, Baston¹⁴⁰ confirms the presence of the small (ordinary) folk. There is no confirmation of the king's activity or speech and, as is often the case, Barbour's numbers are likely to be out by an order of magnitude.

¹³² *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22.

¹³³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

¹³⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 54.

¹³⁵ *Vita*, p. 51.

¹³⁶ *Holyrood*, p. 180.

¹³⁷ *Annales Paulini*, p. 276.

¹³⁸ *Flores Historiarum*, p. 338.

¹³⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22.

¹⁴⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

Barbour is the only authority for the English overnight stop at Falkirk, and for the new dispositions of the Scottish army. Bower¹⁴¹ however, notes that the king ordered a reconnoitre of the approaching English army, though the Scots involved are not identified.

Väthjunker¹⁴² carefully analyses the chronicle sources in an attempt to identify the Scots order of battle. While being somewhat sceptical of the part that Barbour allots to Douglas, she concludes reasonably that the divergent accounts leave interpretation as a matter of personal predilection. She appears to accept the scouting role of Douglas and Keith as outlined by Barbour, but emphasises the comparative inactivity of Douglas during the battle (see below). She is inclined to the view that Barbour was making Douglas “look good” by having him magnanimously share the leadership of a (non-existent?) division with the young Walter Stewart.

Like Episode 11.3, there is no contradictory evidence other than the dispute over the number of divisions, and the supportive evidence is somewhat stronger. This episode, then, may be rated as 5 (confirmed).

Episode 11.5: Clifford’s action (505-662; XII 95-170)

Bower¹⁴³ observes that the battle took place over two days; this episode, of course, took place on the first. *Vita*¹⁴⁴ also reports that, on the first day, a force under Clifford was routed, with many killed on either side. *Lanercost*¹⁴⁵ relates how a force under Clifford went around the wood to prevent Scots escaping. When this force moved well ahead of the main English body, the Scots emerged from the wood and cut it off. They charged, killed some, and put the rest to flight. Gray¹⁴⁶ gives de Beaumont as co-commander of Clifford’s force, which made a circuit of the wood towards the castle, keeping to open ground. Moray, leader of the Scots vanguard,

¹⁴¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22.

¹⁴² Väthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 51-55, 186-190.

¹⁴³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 21.

¹⁴⁴ *Vita*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁵ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

¹⁴⁶ *Scalacronica*, pp. 53-54.

issued from the wood with his division and moved towards the English force. Sir William Daincourt was killed in the English charge (confirmed by the London annalist¹⁴⁷), and Sir Thomas Gray was captured (his horse being killed by the pikes). Moray's infantry routed the English cavalry. Some of the English fled to the castle, some back to the main English army.

Some of the circumstantial detail in Barbour's account is not covered in other sources, especially where it concerns James Douglas. As noted above, Vāthjunker identifies Douglas's general inactivity but, so far as this episode is concerned, argues that Barbour's version is a literary device to show Douglas "in the best of possible lights", as well as to show his concern for Randolph's safety¹⁴⁸. However, Barbour's main points in this episode are strongly supported, and it may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 12.1: The English vanguard attacks (1-94; 171-334)

Bower¹⁴⁹ confirms action on the first day (23 June) in which the English were defeated. He also (via the poems of Friar Baston and the Abbott Bernard) the fact of the king's speech together with some of the details. *Vita*¹⁵⁰ confirms many more of Barbour's details. The English vanguard, commanded by Gloucester and Hereford, attacked the Scots in a wood on the first day. Sir Henry de Bohun leads the Welsh contingent in the attack, but attempts to retreat when the king emerges from the wood with his division. The king intercepts him and kills him with a single axe-blow to the head. His squire is also killed. Gloucester is unhorsed in the following action in which there are many casualties on both sides. Gray¹⁵¹ confirms that the advance guard, led by Gloucester, first attacked the Scots in the Park. The suggestion here is that the young troops were too impetuous to stop for the council of war (perhaps an oblique reference to Gloucester). The king is credited with slaying a knight with an

¹⁴⁷ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 231.

¹⁴⁸ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp.186-190.

¹⁴⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 21, 22, 23.

¹⁵⁰ *Vita*, p. 51.

¹⁵¹ *Scalacronica*, p. 53.

axe, but here the casualty is identified as Sir Peris de Mountforth. Virtually all commentators have ascribed this detail to an error on Gray's part because his informant (Sir Thomas Gray, his father) was prisoner of the Scots, a mile away at St. Ninian's. MacKenzie¹⁵² also suggests a simple case of mistaken identity. Duncan¹⁵³ finds Barbour's record acceptable, and specifically agrees that the actions of the English vanguard and Clifford's force were broadly simultaneous, as Barbour suggests. Though some minor details given by Barbour are not confirmed, neither is there any contrary evidence. Thus, it is appropriate to assess this episode as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 12.2: The English move across the Bannockburn (335-408)

The Scottish view, as reported by Bower¹⁵⁴, is certainly that King Robert had the just case. However, he also relates an event, said to be based on English chronicles, that took place the night before the main battle at Glastonbury monastery. Two men-at-arms were given food and shelter for the night. They had to leave before sunrise to take part in the battle of Bannockburn (500 miles away), where they would take the side of the king of Scots. The English cause was unjust owing to the deaths of Sir Simon de Montfort and his followers fifty years earlier. This story seems to have Arthurian undertones, being located at Glastonbury. Baston's poem¹⁵⁵ also inclines to the view that the Scots are fighting the just struggle, though the friar had been captured by the Scots and may have been writing under a degree of duress. Baston also suggests poor English morale overnight that had to be boosted by drink. *Vita*¹⁵⁶ notes that the English army moved to a rendezvous for the night, a place where they could bivouac. *Lanercost*¹⁵⁷ confirms that the morale of the English army was poor overnight. Gray¹⁵⁸ reports that by the time the remnants of Clifford's force had

¹⁵² MacKenzie, *Bruce*, note 58, p. 436.

¹⁵³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 448-450; 456-60.

¹⁵⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 20, 21.

¹⁵⁵ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

¹⁵⁶ *Vita*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁷ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

¹⁵⁸ *Scalacronica*, pp. 54-55.

rejoined, the main army had left the road through the wood, crossed the Bannockburn, and stopped for the night on the Carse, near the river Forth. This source also emphasises the poor English morale, and that they remained in harness all night to be ready for battle. There is no support for the bridging of burns. Otherwise, Barbour's account is fairly well corroborated, and nowhere controverted. This episode may be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 12.3: The Scots prepare for battle (409-446)

Bower¹⁵⁹ confirms the Scots' religious preparations for battle, and notes the presence of banners. Baston¹⁶⁰ speaks of Scots organising themselves for the battle, and notes that the Scots "are close at hand". *Vita*¹⁶¹ relates how the king marshalled his force and led it out of the wood. Gray¹⁶² confirms this last point. *Lanercost* describes an English archery attack, which is not in Barbour's version¹⁶³. Duncan notes that the making of knights before a battle was a standard medieval practice, designed to raise morale¹⁶⁴. This episode may also be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 12.4: Caernarfon views the Scots (447-496)

Bower¹⁶⁵ confirms that the English believed the Scots were kneeling for mercy, but that Ingram Umfraville disabused them of this idea. *Vita*¹⁶⁶ notes that the English veterans (this would include Umfraville¹⁶⁷) suggested a tactical postponement of the battle, but the younger men rejected this. A similar suggestion from Gloucester to Caernarfon was rejected. *Lanercost*¹⁶⁸ confirms that when the armies had come into

¹⁵⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22.

¹⁶⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

¹⁶¹ *Vita*, p. 52.

¹⁶² *Scalaonica*, p. 55.

¹⁶³ *Lanercost*, p. 207; see also Trokelowe, p. 84.

¹⁶⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 468n.

¹⁶⁵ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22.

¹⁶⁶ *Vita*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁶⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 471n, suggests that the Umfraville incident may be a literary topos, as the tactic was commonplace.

¹⁶⁸ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

close proximity, the Scots knelt to pray. It would seem that the sources, including Barbour, are telling marginally different versions of a basic story about what happened just before the battle. Much of the evidence is in line with Barbour, little opposed. Thus, this episode may be classified as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 12.5: The Scots engage (497-590; XIII 1-46)

Bower¹⁶⁹ notes that the Scots army attacked, and Baston's poem confirms that the Scots advanced on foot. *Vita*¹⁷⁰ describes how the king led his whole army out of the wood, split into three divisions. James Douglas led the first schiltrom that engaged Gloucester and the English vanguard. The Scots had approached while Gloucester and Hereford had disputed command of the vanguard. *Lanercost*¹⁷¹ also speaks of the Scots advancing in three columns, the first two abreast, the third one led by the king, following behind. It suggests that the dominant sound was the crash of cavalry horses against spears. Gray¹⁷² describes the Scots advance in three divisions of infantry, attacking the English in a line of schiltroms.

Thus, none of the sources confirm Barbour's detail of four schiltroms, nor is the command of Sir Edward Bruce supported. This is, perhaps, not such a serious criticism of Barbour as it first appears. By the time *Vita* was written¹⁷³ (1325), Sir Edward Bruce had been dead for seven years and Sir James Douglas was at the height of his fame. This may well explain why one was noted as a schiltrom leader and the other was not. At the time of Bannockburn, it is utterly inconceivable that Sir Edward Bruce would not play a (perhaps the) leading part in the battle.

With respect to the number of schiltroms, Vāthjunker¹⁷⁴ accepts three as the number, largely on the basis that three English chronicles say so while only Barbour says four. She does, however, make a reasonable attempt at rigorous analysis of the

¹⁶⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 22, 23.

¹⁷⁰ *Vita*, p. 52.

¹⁷¹ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

¹⁷² *Scalacronica*, p. 55.

¹⁷³ *Vita*, pp. xiv-xix.

¹⁷⁴ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 52-55.

chronicle sources. McDiarmid¹⁷⁵ agrees the number was three, but his argument is not rigorous. Duncan¹⁷⁶ agrees with both, though the discussion is almost dismissive.. Three is certainly the standard number that English chroniclers would expect from the practice of their own armies. In addition, they would expect the king to lead the rearguard. However, if there was a fourth division (led, indeed, by the king), it would have been virtually impossible for the English chroniclers' "eyewitnesses" to observe it in the heat and dust of the battle. It may be regarded as an important element of King Robert's military genius on the day that he held his own division so carefully in reserve. This has been an accepted strategy for the smaller army in a conflict since the days of the Carthaginians and Romans, though perhaps Napoleon¹⁷⁷ was the first military strategist to formalise it. Finally, in the case of Bannockburn (for which Barbour may have had better sources and more familiarity than other chroniclers¹⁷⁸), *The Bruce* may well have the most reliable version.

In this case, unusually, evidence from English chronicles is mutually contradictory in places. Duncan¹⁷⁹ highlights these differences, but appears to concur broadly with Barbour's version. Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as confirmed, with a rating of 5.

Episode 13.1: The English archers are scattered (47-134)

Only *Lanercost*¹⁸⁰ mentions archers, noting a joust between those on both sides. The English archers were thrown forward before the line (of cavalry, presumably), and drove back the Scots archers. The action of Sir Robert Keith is not mentioned, though it is inconceivable that the Scots could have won this battle without an aggressive and successful tactical move against the English archers, in addition to

¹⁷⁵ McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 1, p. 89, note to line 311.

¹⁷⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 445n.

¹⁷⁷ Paret, Peter, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Princeton, 1986, p. 133.

¹⁷⁸ Barrow, G. W. S., personal communication, 4 February 2002.

¹⁷⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 472-78n.

¹⁸⁰ *Lanercost*, p. 207.

the earlier apparently ineffective action of the Scots archers. Barrow appears to accept Barbour's version of this episode without question¹⁸¹, and Duncan also appears to feel comfortable with it¹⁸². Accordingly, this episode is assessed as weakly supported (rating of 3).

Episode 13.2: The Scots in action (135-224)

Baston's poem¹⁸³ confirms the savagery of the battle, the use of spear and axe, the English casualties. As the only certain eyewitness account that was written immediately after the battle, this part of Baston's poem may be accepted as reliable. *Vita*¹⁸⁴ confirms the Scots' armaments – spear and axe, and the unhorsing of Gloucester. *Lanercost*¹⁸⁵ notes that the English in the rear could not reach the enemy because their own leading division was in the way. Gray¹⁸⁶ also supports Barbour's contention that the English were jammed together and could not operate against the Scots. It confirms the piking of horses and the consequent withdrawal of the English cavalry. Duncan¹⁸⁷ makes virtually no comment on this episode, apart from observing that Barbour may be guilty of adding "vivid padding" to his account. As the main details of Barbour's description of the battle are strongly confirmed, we assess this episode as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 13.3: The small folk join the battle (225-281)

There is no evidence for any part of this account, not even for Duncan's¹⁸⁸ notion that: "Probably the carters did choose a leader.....late on, intent on sharing in the loot, but too late to fight". The key aspect of this account is that the intervention of the small folk was the catalyst that started the complete breakdown of the English

¹⁸¹ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 227.

¹⁸² Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 482-86n.

¹⁸³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 23.

¹⁸⁴ *Vita*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁵ *Lanercost*, p. 208.

¹⁸⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 486n.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 490n.

as a fighting force. If the battle was as fierce and intense as Barbour describes, it is virtually impossible to accept that their approach could be seen or communicated around the English host. This account, then, does not fit into Barbour's overall context, nor does it fit particularly well with the context of the times. Hence it is assessed as not plausible (rating of 0).

Episode 13.4: Caernarfon escapes the battlefield (282-327)

Bower¹⁸⁹ confirms Caernarfon's flight from the battlefield and the death of d'Argentin¹⁹⁰. He also records¹⁹¹ an extraordinary tale from Caernarfon's court that a herald proclaimed King Robert as the first knight of his day, followed by the Emperor Henry and Sir Giles d'Argentin. Watt¹⁹², however, suggests this story may be a work of the imagination. *Vita*¹⁹³ also records the death of d'Argentin, though here it is linked with the death of Gloucester. It confirms that, on the advice of those around him, Caernarfon fled the field and made toward the castle. Gray¹⁹⁴ confirms that Caernarfon's advisers led him off the field, and that d'Argentin was killed after refusing to flee with Caernarfon. Trokelowe¹⁹⁵ gives a more colourful and partial version of Caernarfon's escape from the battlefield. *Lanercost*¹⁹⁶ confirms that Valence left the battlefield at this point, but says he did so on foot (the London annalist¹⁹⁷ verifies this detail) and escaped with the Welsh. Note that Barbour's version of Valence's escape is wholly consistent with his earlier contention that Valence had been given Caernarfon's rein (with d'Argentin) at the start of the battle (see Episode 11.3). Bain¹⁹⁸ confirms the death of d'Argentin in an assignment to his nephew, Sir William d'Argentin, dated 18 July 1314 at York. Though the English

¹⁸⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰ See also *Annales Londonienses*, p. 230.

¹⁹¹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, pp.15, 16.

¹⁹² *Scotichronicon*, volume 7, note to Chapter 15, p. 192.

¹⁹³ *Vita*, p. 54.

¹⁹⁴ *Scalacronica*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁹⁵ Trokelowe, p. 86.

¹⁹⁶ *Lanercost*, p. 209.

¹⁹⁷ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 231.

¹⁹⁸ CDS: III: 370.

sources disagree in some points of detail, there is much support for Barbour's version, and this episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 13.5: The end of the battle (328-358)

Bower¹⁹⁹ confirms the rout of Caernarfon's army, the drowning of many of his fleeing army in the Bannock Burn and the Forth, the entrapment and killing of others against the burn. *Vita*²⁰⁰ notes that the English army breaks up when it sees its royal standard leaving the field. Many are trapped and die in a ditch. *Lanercost*²⁰¹ reports the break up of the English army and the death of many in a great ditch called Bannockburn. Gray²⁰² also notes that many of the English fell into the ditch of Bannockburn. Froissart²⁰³ records the flight of Caernarfon with a small remnant of his men. No other source mentions the small folk. Nevertheless, this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 13.6: Caernarfon escapes from Stirling (359-394)

*Vita*²⁰⁴ confirms that Caernarfon made for the castle after leaving the battlefield. He was refused entry, not because of treachery on behalf of the castle warden, but because he surely would have been captured had he entered. He then made for Dunbar, pursued by a party of Scots. *Lanercost*²⁰⁵ supports this perspective, also noting that Caernarfon was pursued to Dunbar. Gray²⁰⁶ tells much the same story of a flight toward the castle to seek refuge, then a circuit through the Torwood towards Lothian. There is no support for some minor details of Barbour's version, or for the involvement of Sir James Douglas; the latter's participation will be considered in detail at Episode 13.10 below. Nevertheless, Barbour's account seems to be accepted

¹⁹⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 20, 21, 23.

²⁰⁰ *Vita*, p. 54.

²⁰¹ *Lanercost*, p. 208.

²⁰² *Scalacronica*, p. 56.

²⁰³ Froissart, *Chronicles*, London, 1978, p. 39.

²⁰⁴ *Vita*, p. 54.

²⁰⁵ *Lanercost*, p. 208-209.

²⁰⁶ *Scalacronica*, pp. 56-57.

and used by modern historians²⁰⁷, including the involvement of Sir James Douglas. Overall, the episode may reasonably be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 13.7: The Scots pursue the English army (395-473)

Bower²⁰⁸ reports the death of English magnates and other powerful men, that great plunder was taken by the Scots, and that some of the fugitive English skulked among rocks and narrow clefts (perhaps a reference to the castle rock?). It confirms the deaths of two hundred English knights, as well as the earl of Gloucester, Sir Robert Clifford, Sir William Marshall, Sir Edmund Manley, Sir Payne Tiptoft and Sir Giles d'Argentin; the London annalist²⁰⁹, *Annales Paulini*²¹⁰ and *Flores Historiarum*²¹¹ also report these and other deaths. Knighton²¹² is again mistaken when he reports that Gloucester, Clifford, Tiptoft and d'Argentin were merely captured. *Vita*²¹³ confirms the capture of Sir Maurice Berkeley, and the plundering of the English baggage-train to the value of £200,000. *Lanercost*²¹⁴ confirms the earl of Hereford and other lords and knights, with 600 other mounted men, escaped the battlefield heading for Carlisle. The warden of Bothwell castle (Sir Walter Gilbertson²¹⁵), who was holding it at the time for the English, took these lords into the castle and detained them (Gilbertson was later rewarded by the king²¹⁶). It also notes that a party of Welshmen was led to safety by Sir Aymer de Valence (earl of Pembroke). The London annalist²¹⁷ and *Flores Historiarum*²¹⁸ confirm the capture of Hereford. Gray²¹⁹ suggests that only Caernarfon's party escaped without major

²⁰⁷ Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 90; Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 230; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 65.

²⁰⁸ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 21, 22, 23.

²⁰⁹ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 230.

²¹⁰ *Annales Paulini*, p. 276.

²¹¹ *Flores Historiarum*, p. 338.

²¹² *Knighton*, p. 410.

²¹³ *Vita*, pp. 54-55.

²¹⁴ *Lanercost*, p. 209.

²¹⁵ *Scots Peerage* 4, pp. 340-42.

²¹⁶ *RRS*: V: 51.

²¹⁷ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 230-1.

²¹⁸ *Flores Historiarum*, p. 338.

²¹⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 57.

loss, whilst Froissart²²⁰ notes that the pursuit of fugitives went on for two days. Bain²²¹ confirms the imprisonment of Hereford, the death of Clifford, and the death of Gloucester. Hence, though some of Barbour's fine details lack confirmation, his version is very well corroborated by other sources, and this episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed, with a rating of 6.

Episode 13.8: Scottish casualties (474-504)

Duncan²²² gives a good account of the details that surround Barbour's report, but the central aspect of it is that the Scots lost only two knights. This is altogether inconsistent with Barbour's account of the battle, which encompasses showers of arrows, much blood and slaughter, combatants striking each other with all their might. In particular, the action of the English archers, eventually terminated by the light cavalry attack led by Sir Robert Keith, must have led to Scots casualties otherwise there was no need for Keith's action. One aspect of Duncan's explanation is worth noting. He observes that, because Sir Edward Bruce's reaction to Ross's death is virtually the same as his reaction to Neil Fleming's death (Book 15), the two passages were probably composed some time apart. The evaluation in Chapter 8 indicates that the same sub-author wrote Books 13 and 15(I). Further, this sub-author's next piece of writing after Book 13 would be Book 15(I). This, perhaps, weakens Duncan's point and strengthens the view that this whole episode does not fall easily within the overall context of surrounding events. It is therefore assessed as not plausible (rating of 0).

Episode 13.9: The king's response to the battle (505-550)

Gloucester is buried in Tewkesbury Abbey²²³. Mowbray served with Sir Edward Bruce in Ireland²²⁴ and witnessed one of his charters there²²⁵. He also witnessed for

²²⁰ Froissart, p. 39.

²²¹ CDS: III: 548, 705.

²²² Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 504-506n.

²²³ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 230, 369, (note 146).

²²⁴ *Laud Annals*, p. 359.

the king, one of these being dated perhaps to 1318-20²²⁶. Tweng²²⁷ had served in Scotland, certainly in 1299 when Robert Bruce was one of the Guardians, so they were almost certainly known to one another. There is no confirmation of the personal actions and feelings of the king, which are central to this episode. However, it is consistent with the flow of narrative in Book 13, and some of the details have indirect corroboration. Consequently, it may be assessed as weakly supported, with a rating of 3.

Episode 13.10: Douglas pursues Caernarfon (551-634)

*Vita*²²⁸ reports that Caernarfon fled to Dunbar, then took a ship to Berwick, a detail that is confirmed by the London annalist²²⁹. The remainder of his party made the overland journey, with the Scots harassing their rear for fifty miles. [Note, it is twenty-eight miles from Dunbar to Berwick, but fifty miles to Bamburgh]. *Lanercost*²³⁰ also has Caernarfon and his party escape overland to Dunbar, hotly pursued by the Scots. Here, he took an open boat to Berwick, leaving the others to their fate. Gray²³¹ confirms Caernarfon's difficult flight to Dunbar, and his courteous reception by the earl of March. He goes to Berwick by sea, then overland to the south. According to Bain²³², Caernarfon made a grant of 50 marks per year to one William Francis on 24 April 1314 for "his good service and presence at Dunbar". This grant appears to have been reduced, first to 40 marks, then to 15 marks in October 1320. Caernarfon's gratitude was clearly time-limited.

Duncan suggests that Sir Laurence Abernethy was perhaps a son of the Scots-supporting²³³ (1308) then English-supporting (1310-12?) Sir Alexander²³⁴. He seems

²²⁵ *RRS*: V: p. 505.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 401, 651, 665.

²²⁷ *CDS*: V: 205, 211.

²²⁸ *Vita*, p. 55.

²²⁹ *Annales Londonienses*, p. 230.

²³⁰ *Lanercost*, p. 209.

²³¹ *Scalacronica*, p. 57.

²³² *CDS*: III: 548, 705.

²³³ *RRS*: V: 3.

²³⁴ *CDS*: V: 575.

to have been in Robert I's peace in 1314 or afterwards²³⁵, as the king granted him land in Roxburghshire. Perhaps this was his reward for riding with Douglas. Vāthjunker²³⁶ stresses that only Barbour notes Douglas's involvement in the chase to capture Caernarfon, but suggests that Barbour writes up this incident to show Douglas as a master of psychological warfare, and one who perseveres single-mindedly²³⁷.

Thus, the main details of Barbour's description are well supported, though there is some confusion about Caernarfon's destination after leaving Dunbar. Again Douglas is not mentioned by other sources, though modern historians accept the fact of his pursuit²³⁸. On the whole, this episode may be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 13.11: Aftermath of Bannockburn (635-696)

Bower²³⁹ notes that very many prisoners were taken after the battle, but states specifically that the queen and Bishop Wishart were exchanged for the wealthy Sir John of Brittany. He also emphasises the large number of English dead left on the battlefield. He records that many prisoners were held for ransom, to the enrichment of their captors. *Vita*²⁴⁰ notes that the earl of Hereford, Sir John Gifford, Sir John Wylyntone, Sir John Segrave, Sir Maurice Berkeley, and five hundred others were captured and ransomed. It also relates in some detail how negotiations for the ransom of the earl of Hereford became very difficult, but were resolved eventually by a simple exchange of the earl for the Scots queen and other captives. Among the latter were Bishop Wishart, "a certain young earl" (Mar?), and fifteen or more other Scottish knights. *Lanercost*²⁴¹ confirms the large number of dead English left on the battlefield, and that the earl of Hereford (with others) was brought before the king.

²³⁵ *RRS*: V: 489.

²³⁶ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, p. 55.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

²³⁸ Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 90; Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 230-1; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 65-6.

²³⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 20, 21, 23, 24.

²⁴⁰ *Vita*, pp. 55, 58.

²⁴¹ *Lanercost*, pp. 208, 210-212.

All of the captured lords, including Hereford were ransomed for large sums of money. Later, however, the same source indicates that, by the end of September 1314, Hereford was exchanged for Bishop Wishart, the earl of Mar, the queen, Marjorie, and Mary Bruce (the king's sister). Other prisoners were released, but only in exchange for money. There is much documentary evidence, both direct and circumstantial, to support Barbour's version. The Scots prisoners in England, including those named by Barbour, are brought to Caernarfon at York in July 1314²⁴². In October, the queen, Marjorie and Mary Bruce, the earl of Mar and Bishop Wishart are taken to Carlisle castle, thereafter to be taken to a place arranged by the earl of Hereford²⁴³. These movements clearly refer to the exchange of prisoners described by Barbour. There is confirmation of prisoners taken and ransoms being arranged²⁴⁴. Recompense for this kind of loss was being sought of the English crown as late as 1331. There are also various items about the noble English dead at Bannockburn, and, again, recompense is being sought as late as 1333²⁴⁵.

As in other episodes, some of the minor detail in Barbour is not supported. Otherwise, the amount of confirmatory evidence is impressive, leading to an assessment of this episode as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 13.12: The marriage of Marjorie Bruce to Walter Stewart (697-722)

Bower²⁴⁶ specifically relates the marriage of Marjorie and Walter, and notes that their son became Robert II. Marjorie was the king's daughter by Isabella of Mar, and the future David II his son by Elizabeth de Burgh. Much documentary and chronicle evidence supports Barbour's other chronological and genealogical details²⁴⁷. This

²⁴² CDS: III: 371, 372.

²⁴³ CDS: III: 393.

²⁴⁴ CDS: III: 393, 399, 402, 611, 676, 682, 714, 1031.

²⁴⁵ CDS: III: 378, 389, 413, 414, 627, 1041, 1084.

²⁴⁶ *Scotichronicon*, XI, 13; XII, 18; XII, 23; XII, 25.

²⁴⁷ e.g. Donaldson, *Documents*, pp. 51-2.

episode may be rated as 6 (fully supported) though, owing to its specificity, it is hard to see how Barbour could have made a mistake here.

Episode 13.13: King Robert's new strategy (723-754)

At the first Scots parliament after Bannockburn, it was ordained that those who had not come into the king's peace should be disinherited forever²⁴⁸. There is no mention of a year's grace. Duncan²⁴⁹ argues that warning of the process must have been given the previous year at a council or parliament in Dundee. He suggests that this may account for Barbour's confusion over the period of Sir Edward Bruce's truce with Sir Philip Mowbray.

*Vita*²⁵⁰ records a siege of Carlisle later lifted when the king heard (inaccurate) bad news from Ireland (see below). *Lanercost*²⁵¹ reports raids into Northumberland by way of Berwick, starting about the beginning of August 1314, and led by Sir James Douglas, Sir John Soules and other Scots nobles. Sir Edward Bruce is also named as a leader of this expedition. After devastating Northumberland, other raiders passed into Durham and collected much protection money. They then invaded Richmond (north Yorkshire) going as far as the Tees. They returned by Swaledale and Stanemoore, burning Brough, Appleby and Kirkoswald. They carried a huge booty of cattle back to Scotland. The Scots returned at the end of June to plunder Durham and Hartlepool. Toward the end of July, King Robert invested and besieged Carlisle and plundered the surrounding district. They withdrew to Scotland after ten days of siege. In early January 1314/15, the king was besieging Berwick, but with little success. A year after Bannockburn, the Scots were back in England again, raiding south to Richmond, then west to Furness where they seized a large quantity of iron. Finally, *Lanercost* also reports a major raid into England, penetrating as far as Ripon on the fourth anniversary of Bannockburn. A large volume of documentary

²⁴⁸ *RRS*: V: 41.

²⁴⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 518.

²⁵⁰ *Vita*, pp. 61-2.

²⁵¹ *Lanercost*, pp. 210, 211, 213-216, 221.

evidence²⁵² supports Barbour's perspective – the attack on Carlisle, Cumberland, Berwick and Northumberland. It confirms plundering at Hexham Abbey, Holmcultram Abbey and Egleston Abbey. There is evidence of English troops being raised to protect the Marches²⁵³, and even some sign of aggressive activity against the Scots²⁵⁴. There is a record²⁵⁵ of Northumberland men being taken back in Caernarfon's peace in January 1317/18, having earlier sided with the invading Scots. Finally, there is documentary evidence that King Robert's strategy was bringing some success. In April 1316, the English were discussing an official truce with him²⁵⁶. Barbour's version of things is so fully confirmed by this great weight of evidence that it is appropriate to assess the episode as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

²⁵² CDS: III: 379, 382, 384, 400, 401, 403, 404, 419, 422, 435, 463, 464, 467, 476, 529, 547, 560, 616, 619, 621, 650, 716.

²⁵³ CDS: III: 453, 570, 576.

²⁵⁴ CDS: III: 369, 470.

²⁵⁵ CDS: III: 587.

²⁵⁶ CDS: III: 482, 483.

Chapter 6

The Irish campaign

“Barbour's account is a lively one and bears the stamp of an authentic tradition¹.”

Episode 14.1: Sir Edward Bruce goes to Ireland (1-45)

Bower² notes that Sir Edward entered Ireland at this time with a powerful force and that, shortly after, he was “chosen unanimously by the Irish as king of the whole of Ireland”. *Vita*³ records that the king sent Sir Edward to Ireland in 1315 “with a picked force of knights” to subject the country to his authority and stir it up against the English. *Lanercost*⁴ confirms the departure to Ireland in May 1315. Sir Edward intended to reduce the country to his authority, and his fellow-commander was the earl of Moray. *Annales Paulini*⁵ gives the year as 1316, but the report is indefinite and can probably be discounted. They took “a very strong force” with them. Gray⁶ notes that, some time after Bannockburn, Sir Edward Bruce, “desiring to be a king”, went to conquer Ireland with a great army. Documentary evidence⁷ confirms that the Scots had entered Ireland by September 1315, that Sir Edward Bruce was involved, and that naval precautions were being taken against this activity. Knighton⁸ reports that the king sent Edward Bruce to Ireland (mistakenly giving 1316 as the year) accompanied by Philip Mowbray, John Soules, John Stewart, and many other magnates. Irish annals⁹ record that the Scots were led by Sir Edward, earl of Carrick,

¹ Maclomhair, Diarmuid, “Bruce’s invasion of Ireland and first campaign in County Louth”, *The Irish Sword*, 10 (1971-72), pp. 188-212.

² *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

³ *Vita*, p. 61.

⁴ *Lanercost*, p. 212.

⁵ *Annales Paulini*, p. 280.

⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 57.

⁷ CDS: III: 447, 448, 450, 971.

⁸ *Knighton*, p. 411.

⁹ *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, ed. John O’Donovan, 1856, p. 503.

Annals of Inisfallen, ed. Sean MacAirt, 1951, p. 419.

Annals of Loch Cé, Dublin Stationery Office, 1939, p. 202.

Annals of Ulster, ed. B. MacCarthy, 1893, p. 423.

Annals of Connacht, ed. A. Freeman, 1944, p. 231.

Annals of Clonmacnoise, ed. Denis Murphy, 1896, p. 268.

that he landed with a fleet of 300 ships in the north of Ulster, and that the Irish gave him the title of king of Ireland. The *Laud Annals*¹⁰ add some useful detail, noting that Sir Edward Bruce's force of 6,000 landed at "Clondonne". [Duncan¹¹ interprets this as either Glendun in north Antrim or Drumalys on Larne Lough]. It notes that the earl of Moray, Sir John Menteith, Sir John Stewart, Sir Fergus of Ardrossan, John Campbell, Thomas Randolph, John Bosco and John Bisset, accompanied him. This source also notes that the Scots made for Carrickfergus.

Thus, there is a minor doubt about where the Scots landed, and some variation on who accompanied Sir Edward. Otherwise, there is much support for Barbour's version, and this episode should be assessed strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 14.2: The first skirmish (46-100)

*Laud*¹² notes the opposition of Thomas Mandeville, but otherwise there is nothing in the sources to corroborate Barbour's version. Duncan¹³ discusses Barbour's account in some detail, and seems to accept that this first skirmish took place; at least, he does not dispute it. Duffy¹⁴ takes a similar line, having examined the indirect evidence available. While it seems altogether likely in the context of the Irish invasion that such an action should take place very soon after the Scots disembarked, there is very little direct corroborative evidence. In assessing it as weakly supported (rating of 3), it should be noted that a reasonable alternative would be "highly plausible" (rating of 2).

Episode 14.3: The first battle against Sir Richard Clare (101-253)

Sir Richard Clare was never lieutenant of Ireland. During Sir Edward's invasion, the office¹⁵ was held by Edmund Butler from 1315 till 1316, and by Roger Mortimer

¹⁰ *Laud Annals*, in *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin (ii)*, ed. J. Gilbert, pp. 303-398.

¹¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 520-21n.

¹² *Laud Annals*, pp. 298, 344, 347.

¹³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 522-24n.

¹⁴ Duffy, Seán, *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars*, Stroud. 2002, p. 11.

¹⁵ Tout, T. F., *The Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History*, 1913, pp. 343-344.

from 1316 till 1318. *Laud*¹⁶ reports that Dundalk fell on 29 June 1315 with much bloodshed. *Vita*¹⁷ confirms that the justiciar of Ireland (lieutenant), Edmund Butler, fought a successful encounter against the Scots, shortly after their arrival in Ulster. Duncan¹⁸ identifies Barbour's Makartane with a Mac Cartan, who had lands in south Down. Less confidently, he suggests that Makgullane was MacQuillan of north Antrim. Owing to the presence of the earl of Moray, Duncan places this battle in June 1315, which fits with Barbour's time line. Barbour's narrow pass of Innermallan is likely to be the same place as referred to by an Irish annalist¹⁹ of 1272 as the pass of Imberdoilan (between Ulster and Dublin). Duncan²⁰ equates Barbour's Kilross with a Kilrush that is two miles from Ards skull (see next episode). There is no other corroboration for Barbour's version, and this episode is assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 14.4: The second battle against Sir Richard Clare (254-316)

Documentary evidence²¹ reports a battle between Butler and Sir Edward at Arscoll near Kildare, won by the Scots. Sir Richard Clare was not at this battle (see above), according to this source. *Laud* confirms the battle of Arscoll and its result²². Duncan²³ carefully reviews the sources for this battle and concludes that, on balance, Barbour is correct in differentiating this from the skirmish of the previous episode. Barbour's numbers and other details are not corroborated, but this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

¹⁶ *Laud Annals*, p. 345.

¹⁷ *Vita*, p. 61.

¹⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 524-5n.

¹⁹ *Chartulary of St Mary's Dublin II*, p. 385.

²⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 532n.

²¹ CDS: III, 469.

²² *Laud Annals*, p. 345.

²³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 532-36n.

Episode 14.5: O'Dempsey betrays Sir Edward Bruce (317-366)

McNamee²⁴ suggests that the context of this episode is appropriate, in that it illustrates the general air of distrust between the Scots and their Irish allies at this time. He also suggests that O'Dempsey is, in fact, O'Neill. Orpen²⁵ argues strongly that the context is wrong, the episode being misplaced from the winter 1315-16 campaign that passed through O'Dempsey country. Duncan²⁶ attempts to allow for both possibilities. Duffy's brief discussion²⁷ concludes that Orpen is correct and that Barbour's time line is, once again, suspect. Such a confusing episode may only be assessed as not plausible, and given a rating of 0. It does not follow from the previous episode in Book 14 (the second battle against Sir Richard Clare), nor does it act as a link to the next episode (the battle of Connor).

Episode 14.6: The battle of Connor (367-554; XV 1-89)

Duncan²⁸ argues convincingly that Barbour has mistaken Sir Richard Clare for Sir Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster. If this is accepted, Barbour's account is easier to link with other sources. Sir Richard Clare²⁹ was however, undoubtedly involved in Ireland in Caernarfon's interest at this time. Documentary evidence³⁰ also confirms that Thomas Dun, with three others (four ships?), were active in the Irish Sea in 1315, attacking and plundering in Holyhead harbour. Irish annals³¹ confirm that the Scots were short of food though the enemy army under the earl of Ulster retreated towards Connor, and the Scots crossed the Bann in pursuit, skirmishing as they went. In the battle of Connor that followed, Ulster's army was heavily defeated and fled. The Irish annals also confirm that Butler was indirectly involved, and the

²⁴ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 173.

²⁵ Orpen, G. H., *Ireland under the Normans*, volume IV, 1920, p. 167.

²⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 536-538n.

²⁷ Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 23.

²⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 526n.

²⁹ CDS: III, 488.

³⁰ CDS: III, 451.

³¹ *Laud Annals*, p. 346; *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, p. 505; *Inisfallen*, pp. 410-420; *Ulster*, p. 425; *Connacht*, pp. 233-235; *Clonmacnoise*, pp. 268-269; *Loch Cé*, pp. 565-571.

army facing the Scots was very substantial indeed. A letter³² from John le Poer to Caernarfon on 18 October 1315 broadly confirms the Irish account of the battle of Connor.

Duncan³³ carefully reviews the sources identified above and appears to accept the broad thrust of Barbour's report. Lydon³⁴ also accepts a version that is close to Barbour; more interestingly, he implies that Barbour has the sequence of events right in this case. Again, there is no confirmation of some of the detail given by Barbour. For example, no other source gives the wealth of detail on the earl of Moray's preparations for the battle of Connor, but this passage fits very well with what we know of him. There is, however, substantial corroboration of the main aspects of his version. This episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 15.2: Siege and fall of Carrickfergus (90-265)

*Laud*³⁵ reports that the Scots did, indeed, invest Carrickfergus after the battle of Connor. It also notes that the earl of Moray left for Scotland with a prisoner, Sir William de Burgh, confirming why he does not appear in Barbour's account of the siege. *Laud* confirms that Mandeville came to Carrickfergus with "many" from Drogheda just before Easter in 1316. There was a battle the day before Easter, and Mandeville was killed. Note that *Laud* also reports the death of Fergus of Ardrossan at the earlier battle of Arscoll. Duncan³⁶ suggests that *Laud* is right and Barbour wrong, but there is no evidence for this. On the other hand, he accepts³⁷ that Barbour may well be right, and *Laud* in error, in identifying the truce at Easter.

Again, there is support for the main aspects of Barbour's version, but no corroboration for the details. Some Irish historians accept the main drift of Barbour's

³² Phillips, J.R.S., *Documents on the Early Stages of the Bruce Invasion of Ireland, 1315-1316*, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, IXXIX; C, 1979, no. 17, pp. 263-265.

³³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 538-54n.

³⁴ Lydon, J., *The impact of the Bruce invasion*, p. 133.

³⁵ *Laud Annals*, pp. 346-350.

³⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 560n.

³⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 555n.

account in their versions of this episode³⁸. Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 16.1: King Robert goes to Ireland (1-48)

Bower³⁹ notes that sometime during the twelve months April 1316-March 1317, the king crossed to Ireland to bring help and assistance to his brother. This corresponds broadly with Barbour's chronology. Bower also notes that the brothers met in the south of Ireland. *Lanercost*⁴⁰ adds that King Robert sailed to Ireland "accompanied by a great force", to help Sir Edward. This occurred some time after midsummer 1316 and before September 1317. *Laud*⁴¹ notes the advent of King Robert to help his brother, and suggests that they met at Carrickfergus. Other Irish annals⁴² confirm that King Robert came to Ireland, early in 1317, with a large army to assist his brother. *Laud*⁴³ also confirms the return of the earl of Moray to Scotland, though Duncan⁴⁴ argues forcibly that Barbour is wrong in placing this after the fall of Carrickfergus (September 1316); rather, he says, Moray returned in March 1316 and stayed in Scotland until January 1317.

There is no corroboration of the king's port of embarkation or of wardenships in Scotland (though if Moray was with the king, Douglas would certainly be left with the main responsibility for the borders). Duncan⁴⁵ agrees with this last point, but argues that the notion of Walter Stewart as warden "should be seen as Barbour's determination to promote Walter's image". Otherwise, this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

³⁸ For example, Armstrong, O., *Edward Bruce's Invasion of Ireland*, London, 1923, pp. 93-96;

Sayles, G. O., *The Siege of Carrickfergus Castle, 1315-16*, *Irish Historical Studies*, X, pp. 98-9.

³⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

⁴⁰ *Lanercost*, p. 217.

⁴¹ *Laud Annals*, p. 352.

⁴² *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, p. 515; *Ulster*, p. 429; *Connacht*, p. 249; *Clonmacnoise*, p. 279; *Loch Cé*, p. 591; *Inisfallen*, p. 425.

⁴³ *Laud Annals*, p. 349.

⁴⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 580n, also *RRS*: V: pp. 378-79.

⁴⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 580n.

Episode 16.2: The third battle against Sir Richard Clare (49-242)

Again, it is likely that Clare is mistaken for de Burgh, earl of Ulster. According to *Laud*⁴⁶, 20,000 armed Scots were at Slane (Meath) in February (1316-17), accompanied by the army of Ulster, laying waste to the country. *Inisfallen*⁴⁷ notes that they had moved to Cashel by March. Documentary evidence⁴⁸ notes that many wounded Scots returned to Ireland about Easter (middle of April in 1317), but no reason was known or given. Sir Colin Campbell⁴⁹, son of Sir Neil, was confirmed to Loch Awe by the king after Sir Neil's death in 1315.

As Duncan⁵⁰ notes, the timing of this episode contradicts Barbour's notion of May; this, he says, is merely the poet indulging in a literary topos. He accepts that the battle followed an ambush, as described by Barbour⁵¹, but wonders whether there was confusion with another encounter between the Scots and the English justiciar in April 1317, an encounter that was either not known to, or ignored by, Barbour. Otherwise, there is no corroboration of this episode, and it is assessed as weakly supported (rating of 3).

Episode 16.3: The Scots move around Ireland without opposition (243-304)

*Lanercost*⁵² noted that the expedition did, indeed, freely traverse Ireland, but puts a different slant to Barbour by adding that the Scots took no walled towns or castles. Indeed, Barbour makes no attempt to explain why the Scots did not endeavour to besiege and capture Dublin. Certainly, there was panic in the city at the approach of the Scots⁵³. Duffy⁵⁴ describes how the defenders burned the suburbs to deny cover to the Scots, and accepts that it would not have been to their advantage to become

⁴⁶ *Laud Annals*, p. 298.

⁴⁷ *Inisfallen*, p. 426.

⁴⁸ CDS: III, 543.

⁴⁹ Balfour, Paul, J., *Scots Peerage*, 1904-1914, I, p. 325.

⁵⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 582n.

⁵¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 586n.

⁵² *Lanercost*, p. 217.

⁵³ *Laud*, pp. 298, 299, 352.

⁵⁴ Duffy, *Irish Wars*, pp. 35-6.

involved in a long siege. This is a more sympathetic view of Barbour's version, and it is more convincing than Duncan's brief appraisal. Duffy's discussion of the remainder of this part of the campaign also agrees broadly with Barbour⁵⁵, though it also emphasises the part played by hunger in forcing the Scots back to Ulster, a perspective that is not in Barbour.

. Documentary evidence⁵⁶ suggests that some were aiding the Scots with counsel, provisions, arms and men; e.g. Adam, bishop of Ferns. Others were forced to petition Caernarfon for recompense after the Scots had wasted their lands; e.g. Sir William Comyn of Leinster. *Laud*⁵⁷ traces the Scots campaign by way of Castleknock, Dublin, Salmon Leap, Tristledermot, Limerick, Kilkenny, Cashel, Nenagh, Kildare, Trim, then back to Carrickfergus in Ulster. *Inisfallen*⁵⁸ confirms this itinerary broadly, but with fewer details, emphasising Sir Edward Bruce's return to Carrickfergus. There is no mention of battle in any source, thus agreeing with Barbour's version. Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 16.4: Irish kings do homage to "King" Edward Bruce (305-334)

In 1317, the Irish kings sent a letter⁵⁹ to the Pope. Among many other things, they noted that they had called on Sir Edward for assistance against the English, and set him up as king of all Ireland. Gray⁶⁰ notes that Sir Edward proclaimed himself "king of all the kings of Ireland". *Connacht*⁶¹ implies that Edward was recognised as king soon after he arrived in Ireland, and Duffy's⁶² discussion (as well as Duncan's⁶³) also comes to this conclusion. Later, however, Duffy recognises⁶⁴ that

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

⁵⁶ CDS: III, 523, 568.

⁵⁷ *Laud Annals*, pp. 352-355.

⁵⁸ *Inisfallen*, p. 427.

⁵⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 32.

⁶⁰ *Scalacronica*, p. 57.

⁶¹ *Connacht*, p. 252.

⁶² Duffy. *Irish Wars*, pp. 12-13.

⁶³ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 558n.

Barbour may be reporting on an assembly that actually took place, where Edward Bruce's kingship was confirmed, possibly by a wider selection of Irish leaders than before, in advance of the remonstrance sent to the pope⁶⁵. Duncan⁶⁶ also notes that Barbour exaggerates Edward's support among "the Irish kings"; he was only accepted as king in Ulster. It would appear that Barbour has this event seriously misplaced in time, and it is reasonable to ask why. Is it a mistake of his source, or a transcription error? More likely, perhaps, is that he coupled this event with a description of Edward Bruce's faults to underline his own misliking of Edward's Irish campaign.

That Edward was accepted as king by at least some part of the Irish is certain. Barbour, either explicitly or by mistake, may have put the event at the wrong time, but Duffy's discussion (above) should be borne in mind. Thus, this episode may be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 16.7: The king returns from Ireland (683-702)

According to Ottway-Ruthven⁶⁷, the Scots arrived back at Carrickfergus at the beginning of May 1317. *Lanercost*⁶⁸ confirms that the king returned to Scotland on 22 May. He held a parliament at Scone⁶⁹ on 14 June 1317. Modern Irish historians accept the basis of Barbour's version⁷⁰, as does Duncan⁷¹. It is not known whether Moray came back with the king, though it is likely. Barbour's other minor details are not supported, but this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

⁶⁴ Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 38.

⁶⁵ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 32.

⁶⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 594n.

⁶⁷ Ottway-Ruthven, A.J., *A History of Medieval Ireland*, London, 1968, p. 231.

⁶⁸ *Lanercost*, p. 218.

⁶⁹ *RRS*, p. 390.

⁷⁰ e.g. McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 151; Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 38.

⁷¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 614n.

Episode 18.1: Sir Edward Bruce is defeated and killed (1-174)

Bower⁷² seems to suggest that King Robert returned from Ireland after Sir Edward's death; his editors explain that this is the result of inaccurate transposition of the Fordun original. Duncan, however, argues strongly that the king led the relieving force that almost reached Dundalk in time for the battle⁷³. Bower⁷⁴ confirms the date of the battle (Dundalk) as 14 October, and that Sir Edward was killed along with many other Scots nobles. He adds that a relieving force would have reached Sir Edward on the day after the battle if he had waited, but notes that it was under the command of King Robert himself. *Vita*⁷⁵ notes that 500 Scots fell with Sir Edward at the battle of Dundalk. *Lanercost*⁷⁶ confirms that the battle of Dundalk took place on 14 October 1317, and that Sir Edward was accompanied by his Irish adherents. It also mentions that a great army of Scots newly arrived in Ireland were with him. Apparently, the Scots columns were so far separated from one another that the enemy could deal with them piecemeal. Sir Edward fell and was beheaded after death. His body was quartered and sent to the chief towns of Ireland. Gray⁷⁷ observes that Sir Edward was defeated and slain because he would not wait for lately arrived reinforcements that "were not more than six leagues distant". Documentary evidence⁷⁸ confirms that Sir Edward was killed at Dundalk, and that Caernarfon rewarded some of Bruce's opponents on that day. Knighton reports the defeat and death of Edward Bruce, together with a vast multitude of Scots, in an undated battle near Dundalk. He is less than clear of any details, and may well have been reporting gossip rather than hard information.

Irish annals⁷⁹ seem to put the death of Sir Richard Clare before the battle of Dundalk, where Sir John Birmingham seems to have led the force opposed to the

⁷² *Scotichronicon*, XII, 37.

⁷³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 666-67n.

⁷⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25, 37.

⁷⁵ *Vita*, p. 90.

⁷⁶ *Lanercost*, pp. 225-226.

⁷⁷ *Scalacronica*, p. 57.

⁷⁸ CDS: III, 640, 641, 644.

⁷⁹ *Ulster*, p. 433; *Connacht*, p. 253; *Loch Cé*, p. 595; *Inisfallen*, p. 429.

Scots. The battle is confirmed at Dundalk. The “kings” of Argyll and the Hebrides were slain along with Sir Edward Bruce. *Clonmacnoise*⁸⁰ has a slightly fuller account. It confirms the battle of Dundalk on 14 October (1318!), and suggests that King Robert was, indeed, in the offing with reinforcements. Apparently, Sir Edward attacked before they arrived so that he could have all the glory, thereby leading to his death. *Laud*⁸¹ also puts the battle in 1318, October 14, at Dundalk. It confirms the presence of Sir Philip Mowbray, (Walter?) Soules, Sir (Alan) Stewart with his three brothers. A number of opponents are also named, including John Maupas. Indeed, John Maupas is said to have killed Sir Edward Bruce. Mowbray, apparently, was wounded to the point of death. Sir Edward’s head was taken to Caernarfon by Birmingham, according to this source. Duffy accepts this version of events, but notes a local tradition that Sir Edward was buried near the battle site⁸². *Annales Paulini* confines itself to a report of Edward’s death⁸³, as does *Flores Historiarum*⁸⁴.

Modern Irish historians⁸⁵ have generally followed the basics of Barbour’s account. While there is some confusion among the sources, and some of Barbour’s details are not corroborated, he again seems to have the main aspects right or nearly so, and this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 18.2: Remaining Scots return to Scotland (175-224)

The account of the withdrawal to Carrickfergus and the embarkation for Scotland is virtually devoid of detail. Sir Richard Clare was dead before the battle of Dundalk⁸⁶. The most useful of the Irish annals⁸⁷ reports that the head taken to Caernarfon was Sir Edward’s, and its bearer was Sir John Birmingham who was rewarded with the earldom of Louth. However, the escape of the Scots survivors to

⁸⁰ *Clonmacnoise*, pp. 281-282.

⁸¹ *Laud Annals*, pp. 359-360.

⁸² Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 42.

⁸³ *Annales Paulini*, p. 284.

⁸⁴ *Flores Historiarum*, p. 343.

⁸⁵ e.g. McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 185-86, 255; Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 42.

⁸⁶ *Annals of Ulster*, p. 433; *Annals of Connacht*, p. 253; *Annals of Loch Cé*, p. 595.

⁸⁷ *Laud Annals*, pp. 359-360.

Carrickfergus and their subsequent return to Scotland fits well both the context to the ongoing narrative and the context of the times and external events. Accordingly, this episode is assessed as plausible (rating of 1).

Chapter 7

The reign of Robert I after Bannockburn

"It is clear that Barbour had other and better sources for many of Fordun's events¹."

Episode 15.3: The king visits the Isles (266-318)

Duncan² suggests that a charter to Sir Alexander Keith implies that the king was in Tarbert on 8 May 1315. The charter³ certainly mentions five acres of land resigned by Sir John Glassary at Tarbert, but there seems no implication of the king's presence. In addition, the charter was signed at Arbroath, so it may be that none of the principals was anywhere near Tarbert. This mention of Tarbert may, then, be merely coincidental. Duffy⁴ suggests that there is "some evidence" that the king was at Tarbert from about March 1315. This evidence rests on Duncan's discussion in *RRS: V*: pp. 135-137. In fact, while Duncan accepts this possibility, he declares much more strongly for an alternative proposition, that the king was at Dumbarton at this time. In this discussion, Duncan makes a rational suggestion that helps puts this episode in some kind of context. He suggests that the king's sojourn at Dumbarton was connected with gathering ships (from Argyll, among other locations) for the Irish campaign. Perhaps the visit to Tarbert was in the same connection, as further ships and supplies would be needed for Edward Bruce's expeditionary force.

Otherwise, there is no evidence, direct or indirect, that this episode occurred. This is especially so with respect to the reference to John of Lorn. Other than Barbour's giving the king something useful to do while his brother invaded Ireland, this episode does not fit the general context of Book 15, unless the discussion in the previous paragraph has some credibility. It does not act, either, as a suitable link

¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 564n.

³ *RRS: V*: p. 353.

⁴ Duffy, *Irish Wars*, p. 10.

between the Irish campaign and activity in the borders. Nicholson notes that King Robert had a track cut across the portage at Tarbert in 1325, and observes that it was probably to facilitate the haulage of galleys across the isthmus⁵. Both Cowan⁶ and Cheape note the use of the portage by Magnus Barefoot in 1098. The latter also discusses King Robert's reported crossing of the isthmus in 1315. He produces no further evidence apart from noting a local tradition that the king's galley was blown off the track (perhaps the forerunner of that cut in 1325) near a place called *Lag na Luinge* (the hollow of the ship) on the outskirts of Tarbert⁷. Taken together, these indirect hints and observations provide an outline locus for this episode within Barbour's narrative. Accordingly, it may be assessed as plausible, with a rating of 1.

Episode 15.4: Douglas encounters Sir Edmund de Caillou (319-424)

Bower⁸ relates how Sir James Douglas, while warden of the Marches, encountered and defeated in a "stiff fight", a strong invading force under Sir Edmund de Caillou, a Gascon. The latter is described as the captain of Berwick, and was killed in the encounter. Gray⁹ tells of the defeat of the garrison of Berwick at Scaithmoor by Sir James Douglas, in which a number of Gascons were slain. Documentary evidence¹⁰ notes that the English garrison of Berwick was very short of provisions at this time, so a foray was made to within two leagues of Melrose Abbey. Sir James Douglas attacked them on the way back to Berwick with their booty. Among those killed was Raymond de Caillou. There is also documentary evidence¹¹ that Sir Adam Gordon was active on the English side with his lord, Patrick earl of March, up to the end of 1313, eventually falling foul of the English

⁵ Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 113.

⁶ Cowan, Edward J., "Norwegian Sunset – Scottish Dawn: Hakon IV and Alexander III", in Norman H. Reid (ed.), *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III 1249-1286*, Edinburgh, 1990, pp. 103-131.

⁷ Cheape, Hugh, "Recounting Tradition: A Critical View of Medieval Reportage", in A. Fenton and H. Pálsson (eds.), *The Northern and Western Isles in the Viking World: Survival, Continuity and Change*, Edinburgh, 1984, pp. 214-215.

⁸ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 58.

¹⁰ CDS: III: 470, 473, 477.

¹¹ CDS: III: 299, 337.

constable of Roxburgh castle, Sir William de Felyng. Duncan¹² reports that he switched allegiance, with the earl of March, after Bannockburn and Caernarfon's escape via Dunbar. Moray confirmed the grant of Stichill in Roxburghshire to Adam Gordon on 28 June 1315¹³. Presumably he was within the king's peace by that time. Duncan appears comfortable with Barbour's report of this incident. With the minor exemptions of de Caillou's rank and Christian name, which Vāthjunker¹⁴ dismisses as an inconsequential mistake, this episode is strongly confirmed by the other sources, and it may be rated as 6. Note, though, that Vāthjunker¹⁵ contends that Barbour overplays the strength and quality of the English force in order to highlight Douglas's success.

Episode 15.5: Douglas encounters Sir Robert Neville (425-550)

Bower¹⁶ records the death of Robert Neville at the hand of Sir James Douglas, and puts this at approximately the same time as the previous episode. Bain¹⁷ notes a petition from Sir Ralph Neville to Caernarfon about the death of Sir Robert, and the capture of himself and his two brothers at the hands of the Scots. The prisoners are being held to ransom. The petition is undated, but Bain ascribes it to 1316. Gray¹⁸ confirms Neville's death on the Marches, but does not mention Douglas. The episode is ascribed, probably wrongly, to 6 June 1319 in the *Chronicle of Edward III*¹⁹. It confirms the death of Sir Robert Neville near Berwick, and that the Scots captured some of his company.

Both Barrow and McNamee appear to accept Barbour's report of this event²⁰. Vāthjunker²¹ considers it to be more of an elaboration than the de Caillou incident

¹² Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 566.

¹³ *RRS*: V: 70.

¹⁴ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 63-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁶ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

¹⁷ *CDS*: III: 527.

¹⁸ *Scalacronica*, p. 58.

¹⁹ *Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. Stubbs, ii, p. 56.

²⁰ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 238; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 153.

²¹ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 195-6.

described above, on the basis that there is less about it in other sources. Again, she regards this as Barbour's opportunity to underline Douglas's military qualities. She states that Douglas's motive for killing Neville was revenge and cites in evidence passages from *Scalacronica* and *Chronicle of Edward II*. However, when these passages are consulted, there is no suggestion whatsoever to support her contention. Apart from denying the claim that Neville lived at Berwick at the time of this event, Duncan²² has no substantive comment to make, and presumably agrees with Barbour's version. Neville seems to have been an important part of the Durham administration at this time²³. There is some confusion about the date, but Barbour's version of this episode may be accepted as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 16.5: Douglas encounters Richmond at Lintalee (335-492)

Bower²⁴ suggests that, as well as killing de Caillou and Neville, Sir James Douglas was also responsible for the death of another English lord, who also led an invasion party while the king was in Ireland. Gray²⁵ confirms that Douglas repulsed an English invasion force at Lintalee in Jedburgh Forest, and that Sir Thomas Richmond was slain. The English force, led by the earl of Arundel, retreats back over the border. Arundel is described as the warden of the Marches.

Important documentary evidence also exists for this episode. According to this account²⁶, the English attack was specifically to take advantage of the king's absence in Ireland rather than, as Barbour claims, a personal attack on Douglas by Richmond. The English force of 30,000 (10,000 according to Barbour) was led by the earl of Arundel and, apparently made for Lintalee where Douglas was located with 200 men (Barbour says 50). Elias the clerk with 30 men entered Lintalee and devoured Douglas's food, at which point the owner returned and slew the English. Douglas then attacked the main English force and killed Richmond. Note that this account

²² Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 572-576.

²³ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 138.

²⁴ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

²⁵ *Scalacronica*, p. 58.

²⁶ *Illustrations of Scottish History*, ed. J. Stevenson, Maitland Club 28, Glasgow, 1834, p. 3.

differentiates clearly between Richmond and the earl of Arundel, which Barbour does not.

Again, both McNamee and Barrow appear to accept Barbour's report fully²⁷. Vāthjunker's discussion²⁸ of this episode is highly supportive of Barbour's account. She points out reasonably that there was no need to embellish this event, as other sources clearly point up both its significance and the major part played by Douglas. Duncan²⁹ points out an inaccuracy in Barbour's version (confusion of the earl and Richmond), but otherwise finds it as acceptable as Vāthjunker. He quotes one further piece of documentary evidence confirming that one Thomas Grey was compensated for the loss of a horse at "Lyntanlye", while serving under the earl of Arundel in Scotland.

Barbour's precise sequence of events is not wholly borne out by other sources, but the main points of his version seem to be very well supported. Therefore, this episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 16.6: Bishop Sinclair repels the Fife invasion (543-682)

The earl of Fife was back in Scotland by 23 August 1315³⁰, when he resigned the earldom to the king and received it back with a tailzie constructed to ensure that an earl of Fife would always be available for inaugurations of future kings. Bower³¹ records that the invasion fleet landed at Donibristle (2 miles from Inverkeithing). They were harrying the local folk when approached by the sheriff of Fife and 500 men. The sheriff (Sir David Barclay³² or Sir David Wemyss³³, according to Duncan), however, was cowed by the English action and withdrew his men. He encountered Bishop Sinclair and 60 men, who criticised him for retreating from the king's enemies. The bishop led the joint force in an attack on the English, killed more than

²⁷ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 238; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 151.

²⁸ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 68-9, 196-200.

²⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 596-602.

³⁰ *RRS*: V: 72.

³¹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 25.

³² *RRS*: V: 113.

³³ *Ibid.*, 349.

500, and chased the rest back to their ships. When he returned from Ireland, the king honoured Sinclair and afterwards always called him his own bishop. Duncan³⁴ again quotes a documentary source, confirming that part of the earl of Arundel's invasion plan was to send a sea-borne force up the east coast. They attacked Dundee, Aberdeen and other places on the coast. Fife is not specifically mentioned, but the action took place immediately after the Lintalee skirmish. Overall, Duncan is rationally sceptical about the detailed accuracy of Barbour's account. Barrow, on the other hand, clearly accepts the basis of the report³⁵. Since the documentary source covers few of Barbour's details, this episode should be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 17.1: Siege and fall of Berwick (1-170)

According to *Holyrood*³⁶, the Scots took the town of Berwick on 9 April 1318. Bower³⁷ notes baldly that Berwick was taken on 28 March 1318, having been held by the English for twenty years. *Lanercost*³⁸ says the Scots treacherously took the town on 2 April because an English inhabitant, Peter Spalding was bribed to let them scale the wall where he himself was the guard. Soon afterwards, all of the English in the town were despoiled and expelled. Only those who resisted were killed. *Annales Paulini*³⁹ agrees with *Lanercost's* date and with Peter Spalding's treachery; his accomplice, apparently, was John Drury. Gray⁴⁰ says that the treason of Peter Spalding led to Berwick town being captured for Sir James Douglas and the earl of March. Froissart⁴¹ confirms the fall of Berwick and implies that it was the last English hold on Scotland. Bain⁴² gives the clearest evidence that the king collected his men in the Park of Duns to lay siege to Berwick (or attack York). However, he

³⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 606-607.

³⁵ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 238.

³⁶ *Holyrood*, p. 180.

³⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 37.

³⁸ *Lanercost*, pp. 219-220.

³⁹ *Annales Paulini*, p. 282.

⁴⁰ *Scalacronica*, pp. 58, 61.

⁴¹ *Froissart*, p. 39.

⁴² CDS: III: 440.

estimates the date of the letter to Caernarfon to be 24 June 1315. The date may be incorrect, but it does show that Duns Park was a recognised muster point for an attack on Berwick. Documentary evidence⁴³ confirms that Caernarfon made the mayor and burgesses of Berwick responsible for the defence of the town for a year from 1 July 1317, and gave them 6,000 marks for expenses. Twelve of the foremost burgesses put their eldest sons in Caernarfon's hands as security for their performance. Special trust was put in one of the burgesses, Ranulf-Holme. By 13 April 1318, Caernarfon was blaming the mayor and burgesses for letting the Scots into the town. He ordered provisions to be sent to the castle on 4 May, and armaments on 6 May. Further documentary evidence⁴⁴ suggests that James Douglas paid Peter Spalding £800 to let the Scots over that part of the wall for which he was responsible.

Apart from a few additional observations (e.g. only Barbour mentions Moray's participation), Duncan's extensive discussion⁴⁵ on the fall of Berwick essentially accepts Barbour's version. Vāthjunker⁴⁶ takes broadly the same approach, but points out small differences, e.g. between Barbour (Berwick was in chaos at its fall) and Lanercost (the proceedings were comparatively orderly). In this particular case, she suggests that it is preferable to put some faith in an independent source like Lanercost than in Barbour. Why the former should be more "independent" than the latter is not discussed. Both Barrow⁴⁷ and McNamee⁴⁸ discuss the fall of Berwick quite extensively and, apart from the few discrepancies already noted, seem to accept Barbour's version readily.

Barbour has Spalding's Christian name wrong, and there is no support for the involvement of Stewart, Keith, Moray or Galston. Barbour is also wrong about the

⁴³ CDS: III: 544, 555, 558, 591, 592, 593, 594, 596, 597.

⁴⁴ *Illustrations of Scottish History*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 616-28.

⁴⁶ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 73-5.

⁴⁷ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 238-9.

⁴⁸ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 218-9.

period during which the castle held out. Otherwise, there seems to be good support for Barbour's version, and this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 17.2: Berwick castle is taken; Sir Walter Stewart becomes constable (201-260)

*Vita*⁴⁹ confirms that Berwick was the last English foothold in Scotland, a strong castle surrounded by an impregnable wall. Treacherous burgesses handed it to the enemy. *Lanercost*⁵⁰ says that the castle was defended strongly for a further period after the fall of the town, but eventually capitulated through starvation. According to Gray⁵¹, the castle held out for a further eleven weeks, but was eventually starved into capitulation. He also suggests that, after the fall of Berwick, the English were disheartened and sickened of war. Caernarfon's communications⁵² about Berwick from 8 June onward suggest that the castle had fallen by this date. Bain also notes John Crabbe's involvement against the English⁵³.

Duncan⁵⁴ seems to doubt in one place that Sir Walter Stewart was keeper at Berwick, but affirms it in another⁵⁵. Barrow⁵⁶ accepts Sir Walter's role at Berwick. There is no question that Stewart was constantly involved with the king's business at the time. From Bannockburn to the time of his death in April 1327, he witnessed a large number of charters as follows⁵⁷:

⁴⁹ *Vita*, p. 85.

⁵⁰ *Lanercost*, p. 220.

⁵¹ *Scalacronica*, p. 61

⁵² CDS: III: 598-600.

⁵³ CDS: III: 673.

⁵⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 627n.

⁵⁵ *RRS*: V: pp. 112, 131.

⁵⁶ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 239.

⁵⁷ *RRS*: V: pp. 331, 337, 341, 345, 350, 352, 369-370, 377, 380-381, 387-388, 393, 398-403, 420, 423-424, 427-428, 430, 432, 439, 441-443, 448-449, 452, 454-455, 458-459, 461, 466-472, 475, 480, 489, 493-494, 497, 499, 506, 508, 512, 514-515, 517-522, 524-526, 531, 533, 537-538, 541, 545, 547-548, 551, 554, 556, 561, 562, 566-567, 569, 572, 631, 639, 641, 647, 650, 654, 657, 660-661.

1309	1 charter	1321	12 charters
1314	1 charter	1322	9 charters
1315	5 charters	1323	12 charters
1316	5 charters	1324	8 charters
1317	4 charters	1325	6 charters
1318	6 charters	1326	10 charters
1319	7 charters	1327	2 charters
1320	6 charters		

Note that one of the 1318 charters and four from 1319 were signed at Berwick. Walter Stewart also witnessed a charter of Inchaffray Abbey⁵⁸, promulgated at Berwick on 20 April 1319.

Responsibility for such an important border town as Berwick is just the kind of responsibility that a young and prominent lord could expect to be given. It is entirely in character that the king should remain in Berwick until Sir Walter's initial preparations were made, and that he should provision the town from enemy resources. It is also consistent with other military actions in the poem that Stewart should rely on friends and retainers to man the defence of Berwick. Sir Walter's mix of military skills, as demonstrated in this Book, is apposite to a vigorous defence of the town and castle. Caernarfon was aware of Crabbe's activities at this time⁵⁹, and complained to Robert Count of Flanders. Presumably, he was referring to Crabbe's participation in the defence of Berwick. The details Barbour gives of Crabbe's preparations, especially his lack of "gynnys for crakys", seem altogether realistic.

Thus, there is direct evidence for some aspects of this episode, but only indirect corroboration for the remainder. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to assess it as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 17.3: Caernarfon besieges Berwick (261-490)

Bower⁶⁰ confirms that Caernarfon besieged Berwick in 1319, but gets the precise date wrong through a confusion of feast days. However, documentary evidence⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Inchaffray Charters*, p. 117.

⁵⁹ *CDS*: III: 673.

⁶⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 37.

⁶¹ *Itinerary of Edward II*, p. 187.

confirms Barbour's date precisely, putting Caernarfon at Berwick 7-18 September 1319. *Vita*⁶² confirms that a number of English earls joined Caernarfon at the siege, including Lancaster. It also supports Barbour's observations of English fortifications, siege-works, and a heavy naval presence. *Lanercost*⁶³ also confirms Barbour's date, the presence of Lancaster, and the very heavy English attack on the first day. This source, however, refers to the burning of a sow rather than a ship and does not, in fact, mention a naval presence. Gray⁶⁴ notes that Caernarfon besieged Berwick "with all his royal power". Bain⁶⁵ also confirms Barbour's date for the start of the siege, the gathering of siege equipment and ditches to provide earthwork fortifications, and the presence of the earls of Pembroke and Angus in person. Richmond and Arundel sent armed contingents to join Caernarfon. In all, there were 8,080 in the besieging force, including 1,640 archers.

Duncan's extensive discussion⁶⁶ of the siege reviews much of the evidence quoted above, and adds other details that are not covered by Barbour. He does not take exception to the latter's account, except in details like, for example, the English were not entrenched as Barbour claims. Again, both McNamee⁶⁷ and Barrow⁶⁸ accept Barbour's version, though the former makes no mention of Stewart's constablenesship,

There is no confirmation of some of the details of the siege given by Barbour but, apart from some disagreement over the presence of certain earls, much of the poet's version is well supported. This episode may therefore be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

⁶² *Vita*, p. 94.

⁶³ *Lanercost*, p. 226.

⁶⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 66.

⁶⁵ CDS: III: 663, 664, 668.

⁶⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 628-40.

⁶⁷ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 218-9.

⁶⁸ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 239.

Episode 17.4: The Chapter of Myton (491-588)

Bower⁶⁹ confirms that the earl of Moray led the force that carried destruction as far south as Wetherby, and that he “held a Chapter at Myton near Boroughbridge”. This event is set wrongly in 1318, though Bower⁷⁰ reports the raid to Boroughbridge and Wetherby in 1319, to coincide with the siege of Berwick. *Vita*⁷¹ gives a wealth of detail about this episode. It names Sir James Douglas as the leader of an army of 10,000 men, and suggests that the invasion was a diversion from the activity on the border (Berwick). It confirms that the English, fortified by many clerics, took the offensive against the Scots, perhaps led by the archbishop of York and the bishop of Ely. It suggests that the English lost the battle and fled because they were untrained compared to the Scots. It observes that many were killed and many more taken prisoner. *Lanercost*⁷² relates that the Scots army, led by the earl of Moray and Sir James Douglas, avoided Berwick and invaded England as far as Boroughbridge, burning, taking captives and booty. It confirms that the English, led by the archbishop of York and the bishop of Ely, attacked the Scots near Myton with a force that contained a large number of clergymen. It notes that the English force broke up even as they approached the Scots, and that many were slain (5,000 dead) and others captured for ransom. Gray⁷³ too refers to an English defeat at Myton, of an untrained army containing many clerics. This happened at the same time as the Berwick siege. *Annales Paulini*⁷⁴ confirms that the Archbishop of York led the defeated English force, and that many of his men were drowned in the Swale.

There is also documentary evidence⁷⁵ for this episode. At the beginning of September, Caernarfon warned the sheriff of York about the Scots incursion into the county. On September 9, he commanded his chancellor (the bishop of Ely) to raise a force against King Robert, who was expected to attempt a relief of Berwick. Nine

⁶⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 26.

⁷⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 37.

⁷¹ *Vita*, pp. 95-96.

⁷² *Lanercost*, pp. 226-227.

⁷³ *Scalacronica*, p. 66.

⁷⁴ *Annales Paulini*, p. 287.

⁷⁵ CDS: III: 661, 665, 670, 875.

days later, he commands the archbishop of York and the bishop of Ely to raise the largest possible force to attack the Scots who, as he is now clearly aware, have bypassed Berwick. There is also some evidence of clerical prisoners ransomed after the Chapter of Myton. In 1325 permission was granted for a commemorative chapel to be built at Myton.

Both Duncan⁷⁶ and Vāthjunker⁷⁷ deny that Douglas had an independent command, though the latter also observes that Douglas must have played the major role as it was his name that the English chroniclers remembered. Otherwise, the versions set out by these two writers do not vary significantly from Barbour's. Neither Barrow⁷⁸ nor McNamee⁷⁹ use Barbour at all in their discussions of Myton; neither explains why nor offers a radically different version of the battle.

While some detailed aspects of Barbour's version are not confirmed by other accounts, the evidence supporting this episode is substantial. The episode may therefore be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 17.5: The defence of Berwick (589-826)

This is a major episode and it is given a lengthy description that takes up a full quarter of the longest Book in *The Bruce*. As Berwick was, perhaps, the only town or castle the Scots were likely to defend in the foreseeable future, the great detail may have been meant as a guide to future defenders of the town and castle. Oman's extensive discussion⁸⁰ corresponds closely with the information Barbour gives about siege equipment, its use, and defences against it. Oman's term for the Scots sow is "cat" and, like the sow, its principal purpose was to protect miners working at the walls of fortifications. Duncan argues that the captured engineer and John Crabbe are one and the same⁸¹. Why, he asks, is the engineer necessary to fire the mangonel if

⁷⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 640-44.

⁷⁷ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 81-4.

⁷⁸ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 239-40.

⁷⁹ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 94.

⁸⁰ Oman, C., *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, 1924, volume 2, pp. 43-54.

⁸¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 638n.

Crabbe is available? Perhaps the answer lies in the much greater complexity of the mangonel compared to, say, the springald. The captured engineer may have been much more expert with the mangonel than Crabbe. Also, Duncan's theory does not explain how, in the absence of Crabbe (until captured in the first assault), the very extensive technical preparations for the siege were made. Documentary evidence⁸² confirms that Barbour's date for the assault falls within the likely period that Caernarfon spent at Berwick. Sir Walter Stewart's use of a reserve, and his action at Mary Gate, do not go beyond intelligent defence tactics. Some elements of this account (e.g. "the sow has farrowed", the women and children gathering used arrows for further use) strongly suggest that Barbour had good eyewitness accounts to work with. Overall, this episode is consistent with, and fits the overall context of, other events of the Berwick siege that are described in other sources. Therefore, in the absence of any direct corroboration, it is assessed as highly plausible (rating of 2).

Episode 17.6: The siege of Berwick is lifted (827-885)

Bower⁸³ notes that, having achieved nothing, Caernarfon lifted the siege and "retired in grave confusion". *Vita*⁸⁴ confirms this, noting that it followed on receiving the news from Myton, and suggests that Caernarfon and Lancaster separated at this point. *Lanercost*⁸⁵ is more specific about divided counsels in the English camp after the Myton news arrived. Caernarfon wished to send part of his army to England to attack the Scots, while maintaining the siege with the remainder. His nobles objected, so he lifted the siege and marched off. Gray⁸⁶ also agrees that Caernarfon lifted the siege and returned to England after hearing of the Myton defeat. Bain⁸⁷ notes that the English army, raised for the siege of Berwick, was paid off on 24 September 1319. Bower⁸⁸, *Vita*⁸⁹, *Lanercost*⁹⁰ and Gray⁹¹ all confirm that

⁸² CDS: III: 663, 664, 665.

⁸³ *Scotichronicon*, XII, 37.

⁸⁴ *Vita*, p. 97.

⁸⁵ *Lanercost*, p. 227.

⁸⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 66.

⁸⁷ CDS: III: 668.

⁸⁸ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 4.

the rebel earl of Lancaster was captured by Andrew Harclay and taken to Pontefract where he was executed.

Duncan⁹² reviews the evidence outlined above and seems inclined to support Barbour's general theme, except that he is doubtful about the claim that Lancaster left first. He bases this conclusion on a rational analysis of documentary evidence but, even if he is right, it does not represent a major departure from Barbour who says, rather indefinitely:

Off Longcastell I tak on hand
The Erle Thomas was ane of tha
That consaillyt the king hame to ga...

McNamee⁹³, on the other hand, accepts Barbour's view in respect of Lancaster, and he tends to follow him in other aspects of his report on the lifting of the Berwick siege.

There is, therefore, some disagreement in the sources about who reacted in which way to the news of Myton though, as Duncan⁹⁴ himself points out, most historians have been inclined to follow Barbour's interpretation. There is very good support for the key aspects of Barbour's version, so this episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 17.7: Moray and Douglas return to Scotland (886-908)

*Vita*⁹⁵ confirms the safe return of the Scots army, despite Caernarfon's efforts to intercept them, Sir James Douglas in particular. *Lanercost*⁹⁶ supports the view that Caernarfon attempted to intercept the Scots, but they evaded him by returning to Scotland via a western route (though Carlisle is not specifically mentioned). Gray⁹⁷

⁸⁹ *Vita*, pp. 125-126.

⁹⁰ *Lanercost*, pp. 231-235.

⁹¹ *Scalacronica*, p. 67.

⁹² Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 658-61n.

⁹³ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p. 94.

⁹⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 658n.

⁹⁵ *Vita*, p. 97.

⁹⁶ *Lanercost*, p. 227.

⁹⁷ *Scalacronica*, p. 66.

confirms that the Scots raiders headed back to Scotland when they heard the siege of Berwick had been lifted, evading Caernarfon's efforts to attack them.

There is no mention in the other sources of the king's attitude towards the whole affair. Otherwise, there is good support for this episode, which may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 17.8: Sir Walter Stewart is commended by the king (909-946)

There is no direct evidence for or against Barbour's record, so we must confine ourselves to discussing its plausibility. Commending success is wholly consistent with what we know of the king's leadership style. Increasing the height of the walls, which had caused great danger to the defenders during the siege, is also consistent with his approach to military affairs. A large number of masons would be needed to add ten feet to the height of a wall that might have been a thousand feet long. The king's collection of masons may well have included some from the semi-occupied north of England. English masons were certainly brought to Scotland during Longshanks' occupation of 1304⁹⁸. Barbour is, of course, wholly wrong in putting the defence of Berwick before the death of Sir Edward Bruce. However, this episode is a consistent postscript to the narrative of Book 17, and may be assessed as plausible (rating of 1).

Episode 18.3: Caernarfon invades Scotland again (225-290)

Bower⁹⁹ places the invasion in 1322, as opposed to shortly after the death of Sir Edward Bruce. Otherwise, he supports Barbour's version. A great army of English, backed by an ample fleet of ships, invaded as far as Edinburgh. King Robert avoided an engagement initially, and removed all cattle and other provisions from the

⁹⁸ See Taylor, A. J., "English Builders in Scotland during the War of Independence: a record of 1304", *SHR*, 34 (1955), pp. 44-6.

⁹⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 4.

invader's path. Bad weather stopped the English ships landing supplies of food. The English found one lone steer (near Tranent?), which the Earl Warenne described as "too dear". *Lanercost*¹⁰⁰ also puts the invasion in 1322, and Caernarfon came with "a very great army". The Scots retired before the invaders, who were eventually forced to retire by pestilence and famine. Gray¹⁰¹ also has Caernarfon invading in 1322 "with a very great army" as far as Edinburgh. Sickness and famine caused the English to retreat. Knighton¹⁰² records the 1322 English invasion as a reaction to an immediately previous Scots invasion¹⁰³ that devastated the Lancaster lands and carried away huge booty. According to this version, the Scots retired into the hills before the advancing English column, which could find no food. Documentary evidence¹⁰⁴ gives strong support to an English invasion in late 1322 that reached Edinburgh, but was forced to turn back having found neither "man nor beast".

Duncan¹⁰⁵ stresses Barbour's poor chronology, but otherwise his discussion agrees with and supplements the points raised above. Barrow¹⁰⁶ appears to follow Barbour faithfully for this event, even reproducing his (and Bower's, though Barrow's attribution is to Barbour) story about the cow. Despite Barbour's faulty chronology, there is powerful corroboration for this episode, and it should be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 18.4: Douglas ambushes the English at Melrose (291-332)

Bower¹⁰⁷ notes that the English did, indeed, return via Melrose, and Knighton¹⁰⁸ observes that the Scots attacked at Melrose and killing three hundred English (the exact figure quoted by Barbour), but only Gray¹⁰⁹ confirms that an English foraging

¹⁰⁰ *Lanercost*, pp. 238-239.

¹⁰¹ *Scalacronica*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁰² *Knighton*, p. 428.

¹⁰³ CDS: III: 754, 756.

¹⁰⁴ CDS: III: 771, 772, 773, 774, 777, 778.

¹⁰⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 678-80n.

¹⁰⁶ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 243.

¹⁰⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Knighton*, p. 428.

¹⁰⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 69.

party was defeated at Melrose by Sir James Douglas. Duncan¹¹⁰ accepts Barbour's report, merely highlighting the fact that Douglas was not with the Scots army at Culross. This may be mere supposition on Duncan's part, as Vāthjunker¹¹¹ develops the more rational argument that Douglas followed hard on the heels of the retreating English army. While generally agreeing with Barbour's report, she also highlights what she takes as a significant difference – that Douglas arrived too late to save Melrose from burning. In fact, Barbour makes no mention of this as one of Douglas's objectives, and at no time did Douglas put the saving of buildings as a higher priority than fighting and killing the English. Barrow accepts that Douglas was involved in some action at Melrose¹¹²; he quotes no source for this and, presumably, draws it from Barbour. Nevertheless, this episode may be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 18.5: The battle of Byland (333-522)

Bower¹¹³ confirms that the English invaders return by way of Dryburgh, and that King Robert then invaded England as far as York. A battle was fought at Byland (with some French among Caernarfon's force), and the English were routed. John of Brittany and Henry de Sully, among others, were captured and later ransomed for large sums of money. *Lanercost*¹¹⁴ also confirms a Scottish invasion of England as the English retreated from their invasion. Parts of Yorkshire were laid to waste. Sir John Brittany (previously English governor of Scotland¹¹⁵) held high ground with a part of Caernarfon's army, between the abbeys of Byland and Rievaulx. The Scots attacked up a steep hill and Brittany was captured. Caernarfon fled to York. Gray¹¹⁶ confirms the Scots invasion into Yorkshire; the Scots victory on a hill near Byland; the capture of Sir John Brittany, the lord of Sully, another baron of France, and

¹¹⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 682n.

¹¹¹ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 97-8, 200-01.

¹¹² Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 243.

¹¹³ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 4.

¹¹⁴ *Lanercost*, pp. 239-240.

¹¹⁵ *Annales Paulini*, p. 257.

¹¹⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 69.

others; and Caernarfon's escape from his quarters at Rievaulx. Documentary evidence¹¹⁷ shows Caernarfon warning various officials in northern England about the approach of the Scots. The earl of Pembroke was commanded to bring his men to Byland by 14 October, where he will find Sir John Brittany (earl of Richmond) and Henry de Beaumont. At this time, Caernarfon was collecting a force of his own at Rievaulx. An attack by the Scots at Rievaulx is noted on 14 October. On 27 October, Caernarfon allowed Sir John Brittany the attendance of seven members of his family during his imprisonment in Scotland. On 28 December, a safe conduct was issued for eight or ten of the lord of Sully's men to attend him during his imprisonment in Scotland. On 18 March 1323, Thomas Ughtred was permitted by Caernarfon to go to Scotland for the relief of this hostages lying there. The lord of Sully was still held in Scotland on 21 March 1323. On 31 August 1323, Caernarfon granted aid to Sir John Brittany to help with his ransom from Scotland.

Both Barrow and McNamee draw on Barbour for their accounts of Byland¹¹⁸. Duncan¹¹⁹ broadly accepts Barbour, but with two caveats. First, he suggests that *Lanercost* is right in placing Caernarfon's possessions at Rievaulx (there is some documentary support for this¹²⁰, not quoted by Duncan), and Barbour is wrong in having them at Byland. In fact, both could be correct, as Caernarfon had been at both locations before the battle. Second, he rationally questions whether Douglas or Moray usurped the leadership of the attack, or whether they shared control. On this occasion, Våthjunker¹²¹ is prepared to accept both Barbour's version of the battle and his claim that Douglas led the attack. She poses, as an alternative, her general hypothesis about the Moray-Douglas axis, that perhaps Douglas led the attack of Moray's division as the regular vanguard of that force.

Again, some of the minor details of Barbour's account are not corroborated by other sources, but there is powerful confirmation for his version of the battle of

¹¹⁷ CDS: III: 777, 778, 783, 784, 787, 790, 792, 793, 795, 796, 806, 807, 822, 823.

¹¹⁸ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 243-4; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 100-101.

¹¹⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 684-92n.

¹²⁰ CDS: III: 791.

¹²¹ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 98-9.

Byland and its repercussions. This episode, therefore, should be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 18.6: The Scots ravage as far as the Wolds (523-568)

*Lanercost*¹²² confirms the expedition to the Wolds, with the Scots ravaging widely. They returned to Scotland with much booty. Gray¹²³ also confirms ravaging to the Wolds. There is some documentary evidence¹²⁴ for this part of the campaign. Caernarfon permitted the sheriff of York to levy Ripon for ‘blackmail’ money to be paid to the Scots. Later, he also commanded the sheriff to assist “six poor women of Ripon” whose husbands were hostages in Scotland, possibly as a result of the campaign to the Wolds.

Duncan¹²⁵ observes that one of the freed French knights was Sir Henry Sully, butler to the king of France, but there is no confirmation of the treatment of the others, or the destruction of the Vale of Beauvoir. McNamee¹²⁶ gives a well-argued version of this episode, which is sympathetic to Barbour’s report. Barrow’s¹²⁷ treatment is brief, but generally supportive of Barbour.

Thus, evidence for some elements of Barbour’s version exists, but is not strong. Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 19.1: The Soules conspiracy (1-40)

There is documentary evidence¹²⁸ of the peace noted by Barbour. On 1 December 1319, Caernarfon commissioned the bishop of Ely and Aymer de Valence, among others, to pursue a truce and a peace treaty with the king. Bower¹²⁹ carries much detail of the Soules conspiracy, which indicates that Barbour’s chronology may be

¹²² *Lanercost*, pp. 240-241.

¹²³ *Scalacronica*, p. 69.

¹²⁴ CDS: III: 707, 858.

¹²⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 694-5; *RRS*: V: 448.

¹²⁶ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 101-2.

¹²⁷ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 244.

¹²⁸ CDS: III: 677.

¹²⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 1.

somewhat inaccurate by placing the incident around a Scone parliament in 1320. Along with Sir William Soules, the countess of Strathearn (a daughter of Alexander Comyn earl of Buchan) is accused of lese-majesty. She may be identified with Barbour's "lady". Sir David Brechin was convicted of not revealing the conspiracy to the king, and executed. Also executed were Sir Gilbert Malherbe, John Logy and Richard Brown. Other knights were charged, but cleared. Gray¹³⁰ confirms the guilt and execution of Brechin, Logy and Malherbe. It also mentions the role of the Scone parliament, the arrest of Soules, and his imprisonment in Dumbarton castle as punishment for conspiracy against King Robert. According to this source, the conspiracy was discovered and revealed to the king by Murdoch of Menteith. Both Bower and Gray indicate the involvement of Roger Mowbray in the conspiracy and this provides an interesting link with Caernarfon's possible link with the Soules affair.

Soules¹³¹ is found witnessing charters as Butler of Scotland as late as 6 May 1320. He was confirmed¹³² in John's lands in Westerker (Dumfriesshire) on 14 December 1319; this land was appropriated¹³³ to Melrose abbey on 10 April 1321 and given to James Douglas¹³⁴ on 20 April; Soules was presumably dead by this time, as Barbour claims. Bain¹³⁵ notes that, six months after the Scone parliament, Caernarfon admitted to his peace Alexander Mowbray and 29 of his people, all clearly in a state of (relative) poverty. Subsequently, Roger Mowbray's properties in England are granted to Alexander. It is also tempting to see a link between the executed conspirator, Richard Brown, and four other Scots (Thomas Brown, Alexander Brown, William Brown, Fergus Kennedy)¹³⁶ pardoned and restored to their lands by Caernarfon in April 1321.

¹³⁰ *Scalacronica*, p. 59.

¹³¹ *RRS*: V: 166, 167, 392.

¹³² *RRS*: V: 160.

¹³³ *RRS*: V: 180.

¹³⁴ *RRS*: V: 184.

¹³⁵ *CDS*: III: 723, 724, 729, 760, 769, 786.

¹³⁶ *CDS*: III: 731.

There is no support for Barbour's account of Umfraville's reaction in the chronicles. However, Bain¹³⁷ notes a good relationship between Umfraville and Caernarfon in the months leading up to the Soules conspiracy. Also, in January 1321, Umfraville was received back into Caernarfon's peace and his English lands returned to him. He had, apparently, been "a prisoner in Scotland", and claimed that he had never left Caernarfon's allegiance.

Duncan¹³⁸ generally follows Barbour's line, but argues rationally that Soules was not aiming at kingship himself. Rather, this was an attempt to restore the Balliol line. Penman¹³⁹ argues this point even more forcibly and convincingly, though otherwise does not depart significantly from Barbour's account. McNamee¹⁴⁰ also takes this line but, oddly, Barrow¹⁴¹ seems more convinced by the Barbour version.

Otherwise, much of Barbour's version is well supported by other sources, though some minor details are not, viz: the circumstances of Soules' arrest and his death at Dumbarton. However, these are points about which we may expect Barbour to have information not available to English clerks and chroniclers. Accordingly, a rating of 5 (confirmed) seems appropriate for this episode.

Episode 19.2: Thirteen year truce agreed (141-204)

Bower¹⁴² makes a passing mention of a one-year truce around this time, but *Lanercost*¹⁴³ is quite specific about the thirteen-year period and about the proclamation of the truce in both Kingdoms. Special policing arrangements were made for the marches. Gray¹⁴⁴ also identifies a thirteen-year truce arranged at this time. *Annales Paulini* also confirms the thirteen-year truce¹⁴⁵ on 13 June 1323.

¹³⁷ CDS: III: 694, 721.

¹³⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 698-702.

¹³⁹ Penman, M..A., *The Kingship of David II, 1329-71*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1998, pp. 26-28.

¹⁴⁰ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, pp. 235-6.

¹⁴¹ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 309-10.

¹⁴² *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 5.

¹⁴³ *Lanercost*, pp. 246-247.

¹⁴⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁵ *Annales Paulini*, p. 305.

Bain¹⁴⁶ indicates that negotiations for the truce have started as early as September 1320. By December of that year¹⁴⁷, Caernarfon appears to be preparing the ground by liberating some Scots captured after a shipwreck off the Yorkshire coast. A similar decision¹⁴⁸ occurred in May 1321. Throughout 1321, there is documentary evidence¹⁴⁹ of the kind of posturing and pre-negotiation that normally precedes a major diplomatic move. Formal negotiation seems to have started early in 1322 and substantial agreement was probably achieved by the autumn¹⁵⁰. Over the next two years, there is substantial evidence of further negotiation, probably about details¹⁵¹. By 1325, the emphasis of meetings between the two sides had moved to policing the truce¹⁵². In this period, there is clear evidence of Scots' grievances being addressed, but not necessarily alleviated.

Apart from the earlier indications of a good relationship between Caernarfon and Umfraville, there is no support for Barbour's involvement of the latter in this episode. However, Umfraville's supposed perspective is highly plausible, at least in the internal context of *The Bruce*, as we have seen him give devious advice on two previous occasions (Methven, Bannockburn). Otherwise, the supportive evidence is most powerful, and this episode must be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 19.3: Death of Sir Walter Stewart (205-228)

Bower¹⁵³ records the death of Sir Walter Stewart on 9 April 1327, though his editors suggest it may have been 1326. Duncan¹⁵⁴ notes that Stewart witnessed a royal charter at Stirling on 31 March 1327. No other source adds anything to Barbour's account, so this episode must be assessed as weakly supported (rating of 3) due to absence of corroboration of the circumstances provided by the poet.

¹⁴⁶ CDS: III: 702, 703, 708.

¹⁴⁷ CDS: III: 713.

¹⁴⁸ CDS: III: 732.

¹⁴⁹ CDS: III: 718, 720, 722, 726, 738, 739, 740, 743, 745.

¹⁵⁰ CDS: III: 746, 767.

¹⁵¹ CDS: III: 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 821, 827, 845, 846, 848, 851, 852, 853.

¹⁵² CDS: III: 870, 871, 879, 882, 887, 888, 906, 907.

¹⁵³ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁵⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 708n; also, see *RRS*, p. 572.

Episode 19.4: Start of the Weardale campaign (229-408)

*Annales Paulini*¹⁵⁵ confirms that Caernarfon was transferred to Berkeley in April 1327, where he died in September. Knighton¹⁵⁶ supports these details. This fits with Barbour's time line. Windsor was betrothed to Philippa of Hainault at this time, but they did not marry (contra Barbour) until January 1328, according to Knighton¹⁵⁷. *Annales Paulini*¹⁵⁸ also records that Windsor came north with Sir John of Hainault and his men to tackle the Scots. Bower¹⁵⁹ confirms the accession of Windsor at this time, and the Scots invasion to Weardale under Moray and Douglas. A much larger English force (Bower says 10,000) confronts the Scots. Bower also confirms the presence of the Hainaulters on the English side. *Lanercost*¹⁶⁰ notes that military assistance in England was part of the marriage pact between Windsor and the daughter of the count of Hainault. Sir John of Hainault led the Hainaulters. This source confirms that the Scots invasion force was led by Moray, Douglas and Mar. Windsor advanced against the Scots in the region of Castle Barnard. Gray¹⁶¹ confirms the leadership of the outnumbered Scottish force as being Moray, Douglas and Mar. The English host assembled at York, and there was some drunken brawling that included foreigners in the English army. Windsor's scouts reported that the Scots were trying to find suitable ground for an encounter. After some to-and-fro riding, Windsor confronted the Scots across the Wear. Archibald Douglas is confirmed as being active in the Scots invading force. Froissart¹⁶² confirms the accession of Windsor at this time, his betrothal to the daughter of the count of Hainault, and Sir John Hainault's leadership of the foreign troops in England. King Robert sent an invasion force to England in 1327, led by Moray and Douglas. In Windsor's army, there was fighting at York between his archers and his allies from

¹⁵⁵ *Annales Paulini*, p. 333.

¹⁵⁶ *Knighton*, pp. 444, 446.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 446-7

¹⁵⁸ *Annales Paulini*, p. 333.

¹⁵⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁶⁰ *Lanercost*, pp. 251, 256-257.

¹⁶¹ *Scalacronica*, pp. 79-81.

¹⁶² Froissart: *Chronicles*, ed. Geoffrey Brereton, London, 1968, pp. 39, 41, 46-7.

Hainault. The Scots ravaged and burned Northumberland with a mounted force of around 23,000. The English also had 23,000 mounted men, 15,000 infantry and 24,000 archers on foot. To begin with, the Scots evade Windsor, who is short of provisions for his army. Eventually the Scots are found in a very strong position on the slopes above a river. The English establish themselves on the opposite bank.

There is also substantial documentary support¹⁶³ for this episode. The Scots were at Appleby early in July. Windsor orders the supply of victuals for Sir John Hainault's men, and for the English host to move north, also early in July. By July 16, Windsor is on his way to attack the Scots. Donald of Mar is confirmed as being with the Scots. Robert Ogle delivered letters to Caernarfon from Norham¹⁶⁴ in 1322, and was still alive (at Newcastle-on-Tyne¹⁶⁵) on 9 September 1329.

Duncan¹⁶⁶ points out that Barbour is wrong about Windsor's age (fourteen¹⁶⁷, not eighteen) at this time, states that the king broke the truce by attacking England rather than formally renouncing it, and suggests that the mention of Sir William Erskine was inserted to please his son who was prominent at the time *The Bruce* was written. The last point is speculation, and not susceptible to proof or otherwise. Apart from these three points, Duncan seems to go along with Barbour's account. Våthjunker¹⁶⁸ regards this campaign as Douglas's greatest feat. Her account is a rational synthesis of Barbour and Le Bel, and she accepts that Douglas was the "moving spirit".

As is often the case, Barbour is mistaken on a few details, minor on this occasion. Thus, it appears reasonable to assess this episode as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

¹⁶³ CDS: III: 920, 921, 924, 925.

¹⁶⁴ CDS: III: 787.

¹⁶⁵ CDS: III: 992.

¹⁶⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 710-18.

¹⁶⁷ *Scalacronica*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁸ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 111-17, 201-2.

Episode 19.5: Douglas foils an English ambush (409-484)

There is no documentary or chronicle support for this episode, direct or indirect, apart from Bower's observation¹⁶⁹ about on-going skirmishes. Duncan¹⁷⁰ suggests that this event may have been a minor skirmish. Våthjunker¹⁷¹ makes no direct reference, but seems to accept that Barbour is a good source for the whole of the Weardale campaign.

So assessment of this episode must fall back on the question of plausibility. Douglas's exploits here will come as no surprise to anyone who has followed Barbour's narrative to this point. Douglas's behaviour, and its impact on Sir John Hainault, fall precisely within the internal context that Barbour has built up. It also fits the context of the times; at this stage of the constant warfare across the border, the English would have come to rely more on stratagem than, say, at the battle of Falkirk some thirty years previously.

Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as highly plausible (rating of 2). None of it is unlikely, out of character, awkward in context, or a barrier between the previous episode and the next.

Episode 19.6: Stanhope Park (485-616; 688-720)

According to Bower¹⁷², eight days of inconclusive skirmishing now follow. Knighton¹⁷³ notes specifically that the English confronted the Scots at Stanhope Park. Lanercost¹⁷⁴ reports the move to Stanhope Park. The Scots would not accept battle in the open, but continued to hold their ground in Stanhope Park. Eight days were spent in relative inactivity, although a surprise attack on the English camp by Douglas and a small party is recorded. Gray¹⁷⁵ says that, after a three-day confrontation across the Wear, the Scots moved along the river to Stanhope Park.

¹⁶⁹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁷⁰ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 720-22.

¹⁷¹ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 111-17, 201-2.

¹⁷² *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁷³ *Knighton*, p. 445.

¹⁷⁴ *Lanercost*, pp. 257-258.

¹⁷⁵ *Scalacronica*, pp. 80-1.

Among general activity, Sir James Douglas led an armed incursion into the English camp one night, slaying many. The Scots stayed nine days at Stanhope Park. According to Froissart¹⁷⁶ there are skirmishes for three days. At night, the Scots light large fires and make much noise. On the morning of the fourth day, the Scots have slipped away. They are found on the same river in an even stronger position. Again, the English station themselves on the opposite bank. Douglas leads a mounted attack into the English camp on the first night. More than 300 English are killed; Scots losses are few. Eventually the English capture a Scottish knight who says that the Scots have been ordered to arm themselves that night and follow the banner of Sir James Douglas. The English take this as preparation for an armed attack

There is also some documentary evidence¹⁷⁷ to substantiate this episode. By August 3, Windsor is at Stanhope, still looking for more help against the Scots. After the Weardale campaign is over, there are various notices from Windsor allowing payments for activities and losses connected with the campaign. In particular, there is a grant to Sir Thomas Rokesby for leading Windsor to where the Scots were situated (Stanhope Park).

Duncan¹⁷⁸ highlights the time line inconsistencies between Barbour and Froissart, though these are not important in interpreting the whole sequence. More notably, he also notes that Barbour repeats the blowing of horns and setting of fires to distract the English, whereas Froissart¹⁷⁹ only confirms the first incident (see above). Duncan reasonably suggests that Barbour is rerunning “a good thing” here, though this could also be put down to repetition by oral sources. Otherwise, Duncan has no criticism of Barbour’s version in his discussion. For this event, Våthjunker¹⁸⁰ seems more critical of Froissart than of Barbour, suggesting that his account is somewhat over-graphic, especially for the Douglas attack on the English camp. It may be, though, that her alternative description is just as graphic. However, she also

¹⁷⁶ *Froissart*, pp. 47-53.

¹⁷⁷ CDS: III: 929, 934, 936, 940, 957.

¹⁷⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 724-34.

¹⁷⁹ *Froissart*, p. 51.

¹⁸⁰ Våthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 113-17, 204-7.

makes the insightful observation that, for this incident as for the Weardale campaign as a whole, Mar is incidental to the action, and Moray appears to be there only to argue the strategy agreed with Douglas. The latter comes through as the foremost Scots leader in the campaign. Barrow's¹⁸¹ account is broadly similar to Duncan's, though he makes much more of the difference in the sources about whether the Scots crossed the Wear or were always on the north side. On balance, he seems to favour the former, based on his interpretation of the English route to Stanhope Park. He puts much less stress on this division in the sources. Perhaps McNamee has the correct evaluation here as most of the sources are indistinct about position except for Barbour, who clearly positions the Scots on the north bank, well before the move to Stanhope Park (XIX: 318).

Despite this confusion about specific positions, much of Barbour's account of the Stanhope Park episode is well corroborated by other sources, and should be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

Episode 19.7: End of the Weardale campaign (721-820)

Bower¹⁸² implies a fighting retreat by the Scots, using a stratagem. The Scots then return home safely. Lanercost¹⁸³ says that after eight days, the Scots melted away in the night and made their way back to Scotland. Windsor then disbanded his army, and Sir John and his Hainaulters returned home. After nine days at Stanhope Park, according to Gray¹⁸⁴, the Scots withdrew towards their own country. On the day they withdrew, they met a relieving force of 5,000 under the earls of March and Angus (whom this source also equates with "John the Steward"). Windsor withdrew in disappointment and stood down his host. Froissart¹⁸⁵ notes that on the morning after Douglas's attack the English find that the Scots have finally slipped away. They

¹⁸¹ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 253.

¹⁸² *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁸³ *Lanercost*, pp. 257-258.

¹⁸⁴ *Scalacronica*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ *Froissart*, pp. 53-4.

then withdraw to York. Knighton¹⁸⁶ notes Windsor's "great desolation" at this outcome.

Thus the main elements of Barbour's version have some corroboration, but there is little or no backing for much of the circumstantial detail. It would seem appropriate to assess this episode as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 20.1: Peace with the English (1-152)

Bower¹⁸⁷ confirms the sieges of Norham and Alnwick, and the subsequent approach of English ambassadors to King Robert to arrange a perpetual peace¹⁸⁸. After much negotiation¹⁸⁹, a specific peace treaty was drawn up whereby Windsor resigned all claims in or to the kingdom of Scotland. King Robert had to pay 30,000 marks (equivalent to £20,000) to Windsor, and the treaty was to be sealed by a marriage between Prince David and Joan of the Tower at Berwick¹⁹⁰. In addition, Bower¹⁹¹ confirms the details of the tailzie and guardianship in great detail, as well as the marriage of David and Joan in the presence of Isabella.

*Lanercost*¹⁹² confirms negotiations for a perpetual peace¹⁹³ whereby Windsor's claims to over-lordship of Scotland were resigned; the Black Rood and other artefacts were to be returned to the Scots, and the marriage arranged at Berwick between Prince David and Lady Joan of the Tower. This source also notes that Windsor agreed to withdraw entirely from the negotiations between the Pope and King Robert. Finally, *Lanercost*¹⁹⁴ confirms the presence of Isabella and Mortimer at the marriage of David and Joan at Berwick.

¹⁸⁶ Knighton, p. 445.

¹⁸⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 12.

¹⁸⁸ See also *RRS*: V: 326

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Knighton, p. 448.

¹⁹⁰ See also *RRS*: V: 342, 342, 344, 345; *Annales Paulini*, p. 341.

¹⁹¹ *Scotichronicon*, XIII., 12a, 13.

¹⁹² *Lanercost*, pp. 259-262.

¹⁹³ See also Knighton, p. 448; *Annales Paulini*, p. 341.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262.

Gray¹⁹⁵ confirms the sieges of Norham and Alnwick, and the English request for peace. This was to be confirmed by a marriage between David and Joan at Berwick. Various documents and relics were returned to the Scots, and Windsor renounced all rights over Scotland. Gray¹⁹⁶ also corroborates Berwick as the place of marriage, Moray as guardian after the death of the king, and notes that Windsor gave a dowry of 40,000 marks for his sister.

There is some evidence¹⁹⁷ that the king was parcelling out lands in Northumberland to his supporters, as Barbour claims. There is also a mass of documentary evidence¹⁹⁸ for the details of this episode: safe passage for those participating in the peace negotiations; easing of tension between the kingdoms; preparations for the marriage of David and Joan; part-payments of the £20,000 due to Windsor from King Robert (continuing even after the king's death); the arrangement for policing the treaty on the Marches; Berwick as the place of marriage, as well as the fact of the marriage itself.

Duncan¹⁹⁹ doubts Barbour's report of a third Scots division in northern England under the king's command, owing to his poor health at the time, though in the past this had not always restricted his military activities. He also refutes the suggestion that David II was crowned before his father's death. Otherwise, he seems able to accept Barbour's version of this episode.

The reasons for the king's absence from Berwick and the role of Moray and Douglas in the marriage organisation are not confirmed; otherwise the other sources give excellent support to Barbour's version. Accordingly, this episode may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 6).

¹⁹⁵ *Scalacronica*, pp.82-83.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 88.

¹⁹⁷ *RRS*: V: 324.

¹⁹⁸ *CDS*: III: 947, 958, 960, 962, 963, 965, 969, 973, 983, 984, 985, 986, 994, 1007, 1017, 1018, 1026, 1029, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035, 1049, 1050, 1051.

¹⁹⁹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 742-48.

Episode 20.2: King Robert's testament (153-248)

Bower²⁰⁰ confirms that the king died at Cardross, that he properly disposed of his property beforehand, and that Sir James Douglas was chosen (by the king) to carry the heart. However, in this version, it was to be carried to Jerusalem and buried there at the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Froissart²⁰¹ gives a full version of the heart narrative, much more flowery, and less persuasive, than Barbour's, but confirming many of main points. Gray²⁰² notes that Sir James Douglas carried the heart with him against the Saracens by a deathbed instruction of the king.

Both Duncan²⁰³ and Vāthjunker²⁰⁴ prefer Froissart's view that the king decided that Douglas would carry the king's heart, rather than Barbour's, that the king allowed his lords to decide who would bear his heart. Otherwise, both have few difficulties with Barbour's treatment. Lacking other supportive evidence, this episode may be assessed as confirmed (rating of 5).

Episode 20.3: Death of King Robert (249-308)

Bower²⁰⁵ confirms Barbour's chronology, that the king's death took place after the marriage of his son and the "tailzie parliament". He also relates, at length, an account of the grief felt throughout Scotland, and supports Barbour's view of the quality of kingship. The king, he says, was buried at Dunfermline in the middle of the choir with due honour. Barbour also noted that Douglas carried the king's heart. Gray²⁰⁶ notes the death of the king at this time. *Lanercost*²⁰⁷ adds that he was buried in a costly sepulchre. Documentary evidence²⁰⁸ confirms that King Robert had died by 26 June 1329 (actual date is 7 June). Thus, Barbour's account is well backed by other evidence, and this episode may be assessed as strongly supported (rating of 6).

²⁰⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 13, 19.

²⁰¹ See Ashley, *Edward III and his Wars*, pp. 20-23.

²⁰² *Scalacronica*, p. 96.

²⁰³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 750-2.

²⁰⁴ Vāthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 126-7.

²⁰⁵ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19.

²⁰⁶ *Scalacronica*, p. 88.

²⁰⁷ *Lanercost*, p. 264.

²⁰⁸ CDS: III: 986.

Episode 20.4 Sir James Douglas fights and dies in Spain (309-600)

Froissart²⁰⁹ gives a lengthy account of this episode, confirming some of Barbour's elements, contradicting others. He says, for example, that Douglas used the port of Montrose rather than Berwick, that he travelled via Flanders rather than direct to Spain, and that Douglas died after making a foolhardy charge rather than in a rescue mission for a colleague. Bower²¹⁰ confirms that Douglas died in Spain fighting against the Saracens with the king of Spain, and gives the place and date as Teba castle on 25 August 1330. He also records that a sultan leads the large Saracen army. The Saracens suffered a reverse in the battle. As Sir James was returning with a small party, another sultan ambushed him. Sir James attacked the enemy, and was killed in the struggle with Sir William Sinclair, Sir Robert Logan and many other Scottish knights. Bower also has a reference to "ossibus omissis", which his editors translate as "lost bones". Duncan²¹¹ prefers the translation "dead bones", which certainly fits more closely with Barbour's account. Duncan also notes that Sir James Douglas's tomb still lies in the surviving chancel of St. Bride's church at Douglas.

Gray²¹² also notes that Douglas died in Spain fighting the Saracens, and had the king's heart with him in this crusade. According to Bain²¹³, Windsor commended Douglas to King Alfonso "on his way to the Holy Land against the Saracens". Sir James is also granted protection for seven years "with the heart of the late Robert king of Scotland, in aid of the Christians against the Saracens".

Väthjunker²¹⁴ carries a long discussion on this episode that is marked by two features. First, she seems prepared to accept the main lines of Barbour's version, though noting the differences with Froissart mentioned above, albeit setting the scene for an honourable death for Douglas. Second, she takes issue with Barbour on

²⁰⁹ See Ashley, pp. 23-5.

²¹⁰ *Scotichronicon*, XIII, 20.

²¹¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 770n, 772n.

²¹² *Scalacronica*, p. 96.

²¹³ CDS: III: 990, 991.

²¹⁴ Väthjunker, *Doctoral Dissertation*, pp. 209-14.

a number of minor points, where she tries to carry his information well beyond the point intended. For example, dealing with Douglas's speech at XX: 456-66:

Possibly Barbour may have failed to notice that Douglas's talk of survival made little sense because he had his eyes on a different problem. Having found it desirable to present a vastly overwhelming enemy to account for Douglas's eventual failure, he is now faced with the dilemma that under these circumstances, Douglas's support of Sinclair is plainly suicidal.

Barrow²¹⁵ prefers Froissart's detail of Douglas's voyage, but reverts to Barbour for the final battle. Some of Barbour's details are unconfirmed, yet he clearly has a substantial part of this episode right. In his major study of the Douglas family, Brown appears to accept this evaluation straightforwardly²¹⁶. It may therefore be assessed as supported (rating of 4).

Episode 20.5: Death of the earl of Moray (601-630)

Bower²¹⁷ records the death of the earl of Moray, guardian of Scotland, on 20 July 1332, poisoned by "a certain English friar" to prepare the way for the invasion of "the disinherited". Moray's record as a highly successful guardian is also set out in some detail. *Lanercost*²¹⁸ and Gray²¹⁹ both briefly refer to Moray's death at this time. There is documentary evidence that King Robert wished his heart to be buried at Melrose²²⁰, but there is no confirmation that it actually happened. Duncan²²¹ notes that something wrapped in lead ("probably Bruce's heart") was unearthed at Melrose in the 1930s and 1996, and reburied on both occasions. He also suggests that Moray died of liver cancer rather than poison, but otherwise seems to accept Barbour's

²¹⁵ Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 323-4.

²¹⁶ Brown, Michael, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland 1300-1455*, East Linton, 1998, p. 27.

²¹⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XI, 21; XIII, 17, 18, 21.

²¹⁸ *Lanercost*, p. 268.

²¹⁹ *Scalacronica*, p. 89.

²²⁰ *RRS*: V: 380.

²²¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 772n.

account. Thus, there is substantial support for this episode, and it may be assessed as strongly confirmed (rating of 5).

Summary of Chapters 4-7

One hundred and nineteen episodes have been evaluated in the last four chapters. The full results of this analysis can be found in Appendix 3, and are summarised below.

Not plausible	rating of 0	4 episodes
Plausible	rating of 1	17 episodes
Highly plausible	rating of 2	7 episodes
Weakly supported	rating of 3	13 episodes
Supported	rating of 4	23 episodes
Confirmed	rating of 5	26 episodes
Strongly confirmed	rating of 6	29 episodes

Note that these results carry no implication of “true” or “untrue” – they may be either –only that their historicity has been evaluated by the method set out in Chapter 3. Average ratings for each book are shown in Table 1. Note that these figures are not statistical means in the normal sense. Each average figure stands as a shorthand notation for a description of historicity. For example, Book 1 has an average rating of 3.8. This means that, taken as a whole, the chapter has a historicity level of much nearer “supported” than “weakly supported. The “Total rating” column is the sum, for each Book, of the ratings applied to each episode in the Book. The “Average Rating” column is the total rating divided by the number of episodes in each Book. The format and distribution of the data in Table 1 is, to some extent, dependent on how each book is divided into episodes for analysis. However, average rating and total rating for each Book yield two complementary perspectives on the historicity of *The Bruce*.

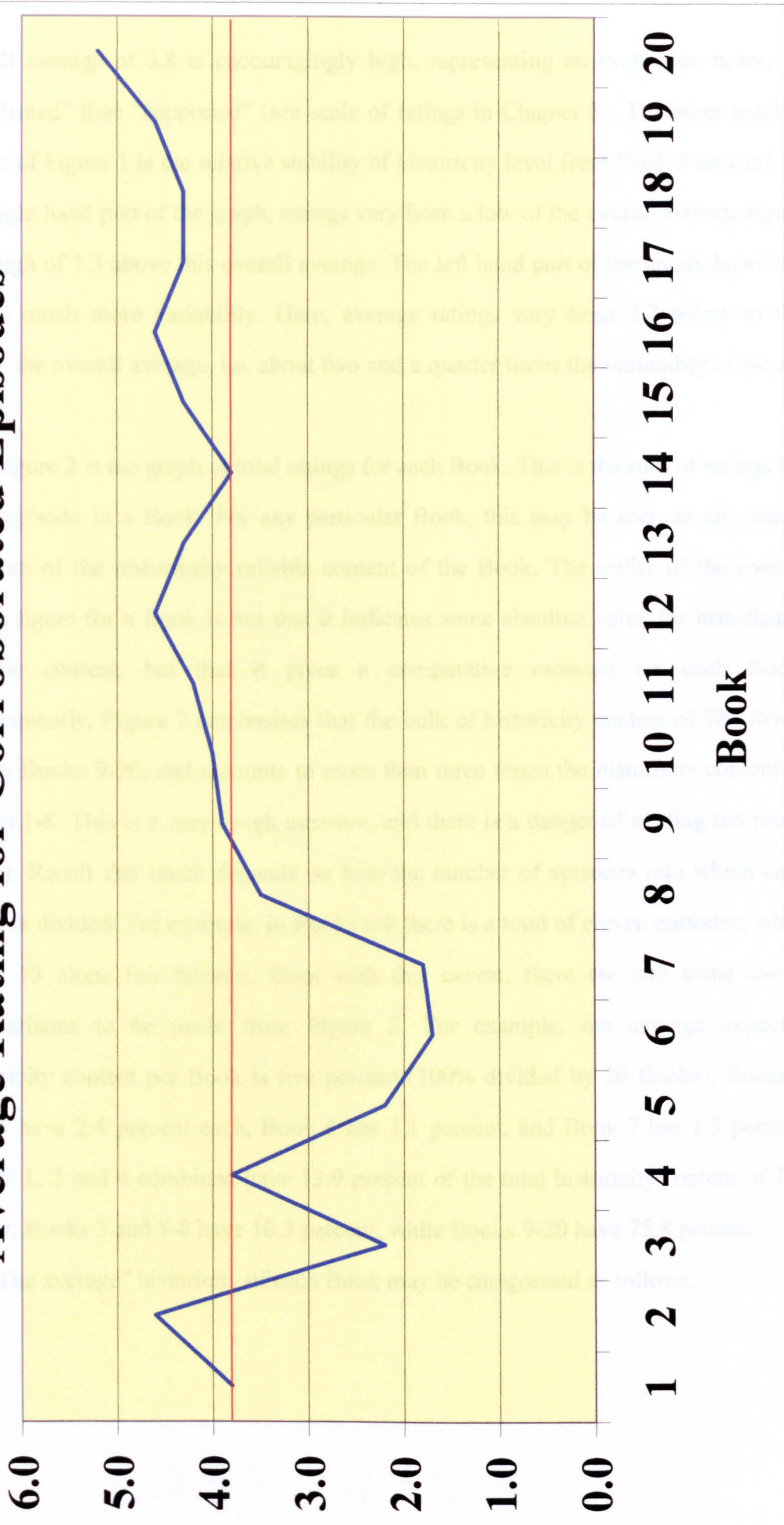
Figure 1 is a graph of the average ratings for each Book, with a horizontal red line superimposed to show the average rating of all 119 episodes in *The Bruce*. This

Table 1

Summary of Ratings of Corroborated Episodes

Book	Total Rating	Average Rating
1	19	3.8
2	23	4.6
3	11	2.2
4	23	3.8
5	11	2.2
6	5	1.7
7	7	1.8
8	14	3.5
9	35	3.9
10	28	4.0
11	21	4.2
12	23	4.6
13	56	4.3
14	23	3.8
15	17	4.3
16	32	4.6
17	34	4.3
18	26	4.3
19	32	4.6
20	26	5.2
Overall	466	3.9

Figure 1
Average Rating for Corroborated Episodes

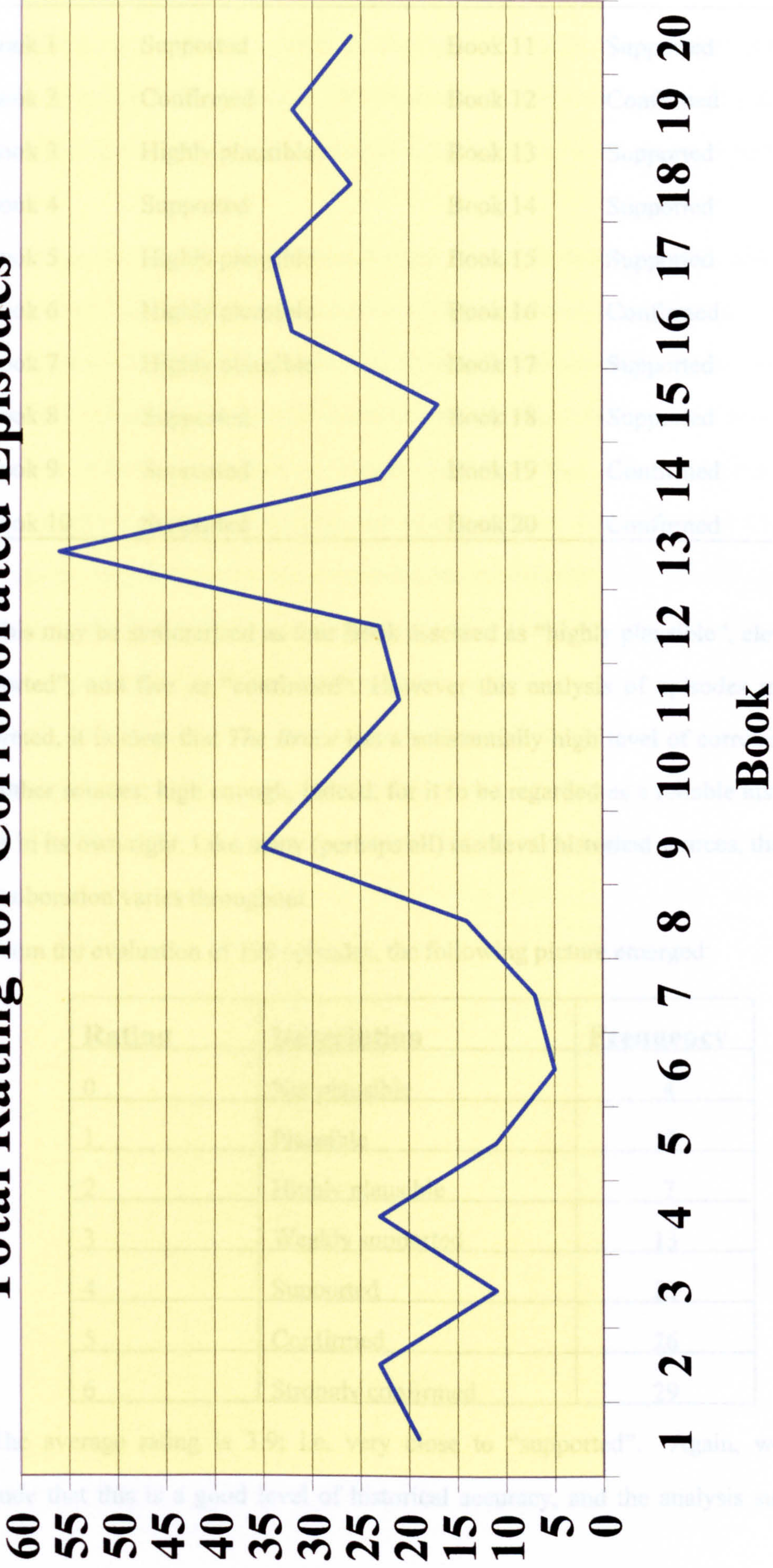


overall average of 3.8 is encouragingly high, representing an evaluation nearer to “confirmed” than “supported” (see scale of ratings in Chapter 3). The other notable aspect of Figure 1 is the relative stability of historicity level from Book 9 onward. In this right hand part of the graph, ratings vary from a low of the overall average figure to a high of 1.3 above this overall average. The left hand part of the graph, however, shows much more variability. Here, average ratings vary from 2.2 below to 0.7 above the overall average, i.e. about two and a quarter times the variability of Books 9-20.

Figure 2 is the graph of total ratings for each Book. This is the sum of ratings for each episode in a Book. For any particular Book, this may be seen as an overall measure of the historically reliable content of the Book. The utility of the overall rating figure for a Book is not that it indicates some absolute value for historically reliable content, but that it gives a comparative measure for each Book. Consequently, Figure 2 emphasises that the bulk of historicity content of *The Bruce* lies in Books 9-20, and amounts to more than three times the historicity content of Books 1-8. This is a very rough measure, and there is a danger of reading too much into it. Recall that much depends on how the number of episodes into which each Book is divided. For example, in Books 6-8 there is a total of eleven episodes, while Book 13 alone has thirteen. Even with this caveat, there are still some useful comparisons to be made from Figure 2. For example, the average expected historicity content per Book is five percent (100% divided by 20 Books). Books 3 and 5 have 2.4 percent each, Book 6 has 1.1 percent, and Book 7 has 1.5 percent. Books 1, 2 and 4 combined have 13.9 percent of the total historicity content of *The Bruce*, Books 3 and 5-8 have 10.3 percent, while Books 9-20 have 75.8 percent.

The average” historicity of each Book may be categorised as follows:

Figure 2
Total Rating for Corroborated Episodes



Book 1	Supported	Book 11	Supported
Book 2	Confirmed	Book 12	Confirmed
Book 3	Highly plausible	Book 13	Supported
Book 4	Supported	Book 14	Supported
Book 5	Highly plausible	Book 15	Supported
Book 6	Highly plausible	Book 16	Confirmed
Book 7	Highly plausible	Book 17	Supported
Book 8	Supported	Book 18	Supported
Book 9	Supported	Book 19	Confirmed
Book 10	Supported	Book 20	Confirmed

This may be summarised as four Book assessed as “highly plausible”, eleven as “supported”, and five as “confirmed”. However this analysis of episodes may be interpreted, it is clear that *The Bruce* has a substantially high level of corroboration from other sources; high enough, indeed, for it to be regarded as a reliable historical source in its own right. Like many (perhaps all) medieval historical sources, the level of corroboration varies throughout.

From the evaluation of 199 episodes, the following picture emerged:

Rating	Description	Frequency
0	Not plausible	4
1	Plausible	17
2	Highly plausible	7
3	Weakly supported	13
4	Supported	23
5	Confirmed	26
6	Strongly confirmed	29

The average rating is 3.9; i.e. very close to “supported”. Again, we may conclude that this is a good level of historical accuracy, and the analysis suggests

that *The Bruce* is a valuable source for the period 1306-29. This is particularly so from the campaign in Buchan (late 1307) onward. It may also be rationally claimed that the analytical methodology set out in Chapter 3 has been demonstrated to be effective.

With specific respect to the twenty-eight uncorroborated episodes within the overall total of 119, it can be seen from the table immediately above that the median rating for these is "plausible". Despite this, these episodes should be used as a source of historical information only with extreme caution. Many, perhaps all, sources for this period carry uncorroborated events and data that historiographers use, sometimes with a cautionary warning, sometimes without. The analysis of Chapters 4-7 suggests that those who use uncorroborated incidents from *The Bruce* with appropriate caution are not being rash, particularly if their choice of such episodes is based on some rational analysis like the one used here.

Finally, it is evident from the evaluation presented above that *The Bruce* carries a rich vein of dependable, even authoritative material, and that it has a place at the elbow of the historian who wishes to present a full narrative of the reign of Robert I.

Chapter 8

Word analysis

“It is difficult to read Barbour and not feel a personal liking for the man¹.”

There is a commonly held assumption that John Barbour was the sole author of *The Bruce*. There may, however, be some reason for the notion that several hands produced the work. It appears that this question has not been addressed either in Scottish historiography or Scottish literary criticism. Thomson did raise the question briefly in a 1909 review of Mackenzie’s edition of *The Bruce*, but passed on without further consideration:

“... is *The Bruce*, as it has come down to us, the book which Barbour wrote, or, in part at least, the work of another?”²

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a preliminary response to Thomson’s question that will open up the issue for further discussion and the direction of future research. It will also, hopefully, add a helpful dimension to the evaluation of the historicity of *The Bruce*.

The analysis below rests on the premise that a practiced writer will use a fairly well-established vocabulary, and will draw words from it on a systematic basis. The frequency of use of individual words from the writer’s basic vocabulary may establish a profile that is distinguished from that of other writers. Significant variation from one point to another of a substantial corpus may indicate different authorship. In some circumstances, however, it may also suggest different writing environments, internal or external to the author, or both.

As Barbour wrote the different parts of his opus he would, of course, be confronted by different demands on his vocabulary. For example, guerrilla warfare requires a different terminology to pitched battle, philosophical reflection will not be

¹ Mackenzie, *Literature*, p. 54.

² Thomson, J. Maitland, “John Barbour: *The Bruce*”, *Scottish Historical Review*, volume 7, 1909, pp. 75-77.

the same as direct speech, and different geographical locations will put varying demands on the basic vocabulary. Accordingly, the analysis that follows makes use of the most frequently used words in the vocabulary – prepositions, personal pronouns, conjunctions. It may be that systematic variation in the frequency of use of such words is indicative of different writers. Certainly, there seems no obvious reason why, other things being equal, an individual practiced writer would demonstrate systematic variation in frequency of use within a substantial corpus. Use of such basic words may also offer some protection against random variation injected by faulty copying of the original manuscript through the centuries.

The analytical approach followed here is analogous to linguistic studies of the bible, Shakespeare, and other works of literature. Parunak³ developed a crude method of textual analysis in 1979, using the Book of Zechariah as a test bed. Later, in a significant refinement of the technique, he used cluster analysis of word distribution to interpret the structure of the Book of Ezekiel⁴. Hope has successfully applied frequency distribution of key words to establish that certain of Shakespeare's plays (e.g. *Henry VIII*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Pericles*) are collaborative works, with another hand – additional to Shakespeare's – at work. One of his conclusions is of specific interest here:

“Even where specific candidates for authorship have not been agreed upon, or where there are not comparison samples available for all candidates, it is still possible for this type of evidence to make limited contributions to the authorship debates surrounding texts⁵.”

Basic analyses

There are two types of division within *The Bruce*; these, it may be speculated, could be due to contributions by different authors. According to Duncan⁶, the poem originally ended at the end of Book 13, with King Robert at the height of his powers

³ Parunak, H.V.D., *Linguistic Density Plots in Zechariah*, Ann Arbor, 1979.

⁴ Parunak, H.V.D., *Linguistic Density Plots in Ezekiel*, 2 volumes, Ann Arbor, 1984, volume 1, pp. 29-53.

⁵ Hope, Jonathan, *The authorship of Shakespeare's plays: A socio-linguistic study*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 149.

⁶ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 8-9.

following victory at Bannockburn. The final seven books were added later, and these contain some quite different stylistic and structural elements⁷. Secondly, and somewhat less definitively, there may be a difference between the struggle in Scotland and the brief campaign in Ireland (which accounts for about a tenth of the whole). Underlying this division is the simple possibility of (quite) different sources⁸, though it is not impossible that the Irish campaign is the work of a different writer whose vocabulary was partially imposed on Barbour in the transformation into poetry.

The Bruce comprises 13,645 lines in twenty books. Pinkerton implemented the division into books⁹ in his 1869 edition. His choice of break point between the books is often pragmatic. There is a smooth transition, carrying on the same detailed story line in six instances (Book 1–Book 2, 2–3, 3–4, 6–7, 10–11, 14–15). Ten breakpoints constitute a continuation of the same main narrative line (5–6, 7–8, 8–9, 9–10, 11–12, 12–13, 15–16, 16–17, 17–18, 19–20). In only three instances is there a change to a new narrative line (4–5, 13–14, 18–19). Nevertheless, this division into books is a convenient one, and will be used in the following analysis. Where appropriate, the books and parts of books that comprise the Irish campaign will be differentiated from parts of the poem. Thus, Book 14 is entirely about Ireland, while Book 15 is divided between the Irish campaign [15(I)] and the Scottish narrative [15(S)]. Similarly, we have 16(I) and 16(S), 18(I) and 18(S).

In passing, it should be noted that Jamieson divided the work into fourteen books, as opposed to Pinkerton's twenty, implying that his method was more clearly aligned to the content of the subdivisions¹⁰. Innes reverted to what he believed were Barbour's chapters or "fyttes", as these shorter subdivisions are found in both C and E manuscripts¹¹, and because "they are manifestly useful for the sense in many places." In all, there are 150 fyttes. McDiarmid reflects these fyttes by indentations

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 10–11.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁹ Pinkerton, *Bruce*, p. viii.

¹⁰ Jamieson, *Bruce*, p. xxii.

¹¹ Innes, *Bruce*, p. xxx.

in the text¹². Duncan goes further, subdividing many of the original fyttes, and adding a brief descriptive rubric to each of his 259 subdivisions¹³.

Using Duncan's edition of *The Bruce*, each book of the poem was scanned into *Microsoft Word*. Careful proof reading of the computerised copy was carried out at this stage to eliminate errors due to optical character reading. A number of typographic errors in Duncan's text of the poem were also corrected at this stage. Using *Word's* editing facilities, a number of operations were carried out. First, all rubrics, line numbers and punctuation were removed. Second, the lines of the script were converted into a list of individual words. Third, the list was sorted alphabetically and printed. Separate lists for Ireland and Scotland were also made for Books 15, 16 and 18. As a final stage of basic analysis, the hard copy was subjected to a manual count to establish the frequency of occurrence of each word. Different spellings of words were maintained. Where possible, differentiation was maintained between different words that had the same spelling (e.g. "schyr" meaning sir or lord, "schyr" meaning brightly).

In the 13,645 lines of *The Bruce* there are a total of 87,696 words. The total vocabulary comprises 6284 words, including spelling variants. The rate at which these are introduced into the script is shown in Figure 3. Naturally, the largest number of new words is introduced in Book 1, where the first use of every discrete word in this Book is also a new addition to the overall vocabulary. In normal circumstances, it could be expected that the number of new words would reduce gradually with each Book. This is the general trend of Figure 3, but some exceptions should be noted. There are counter-intuitional increases in Books 3, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 19 (i.e. 40 percent exceptions).

Figure 3 may be misleading, in that it takes no account of the gross number of words in each Book, or of the extent of the vocabulary in each Book. Figure 4 shows the data of Figure 3 divided, in each case, by the overall vocabulary total for each

¹² McDiarmid, *Bruce*, volume 2, p. xiii.

¹³ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 32-33.

Figure 3
Additions to Vocabulary

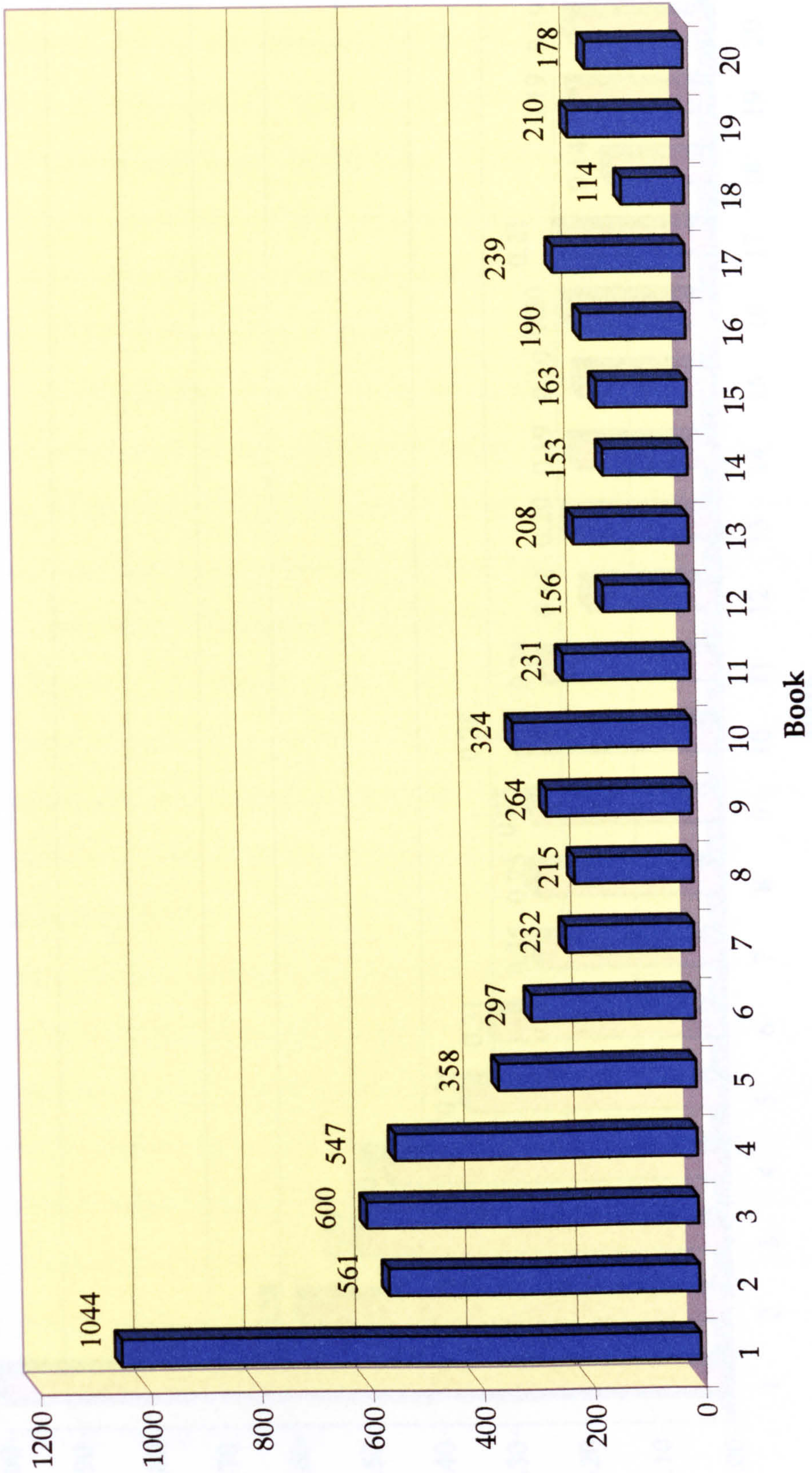
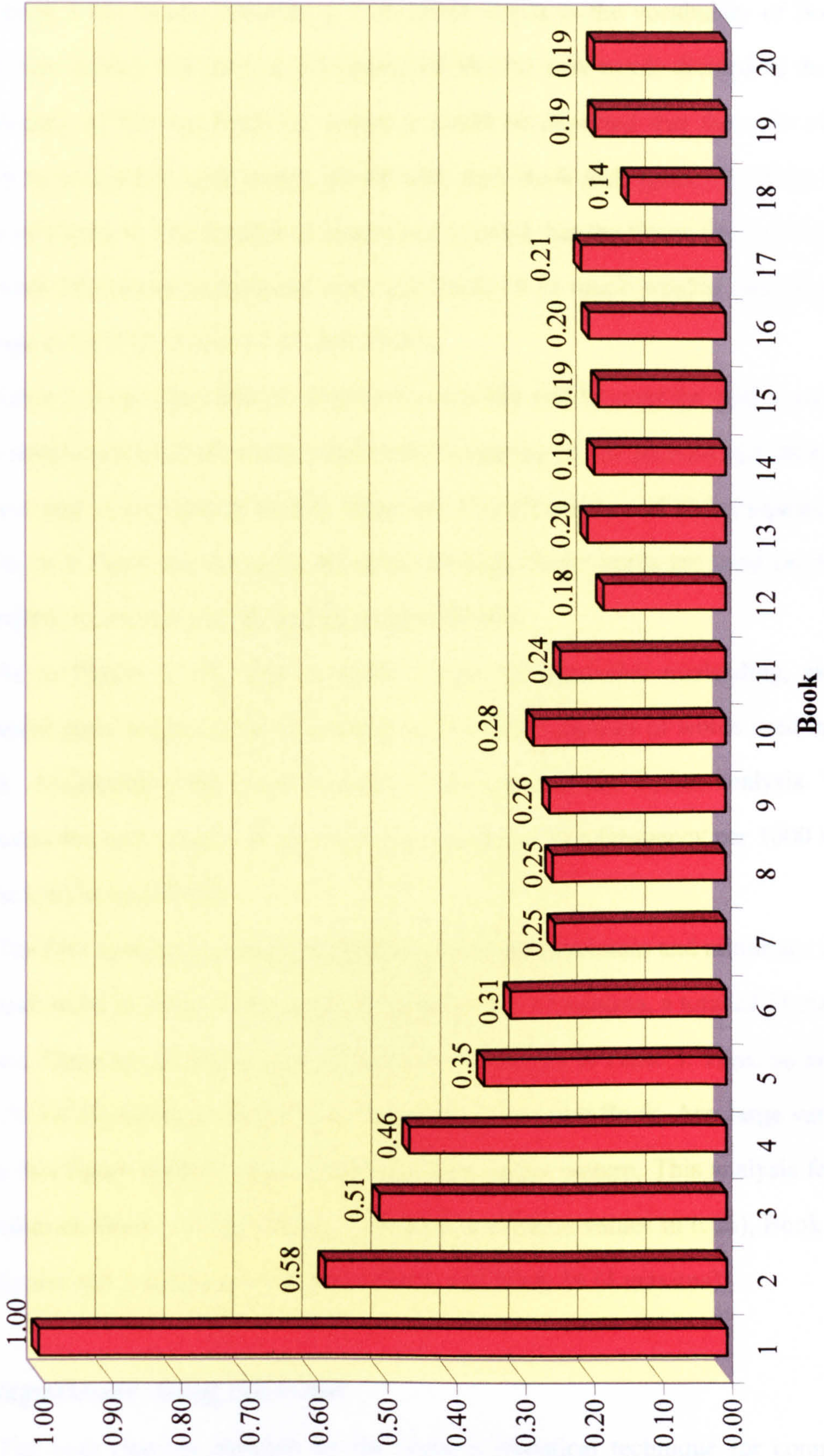


Figure 4
Proportional Additions to Vocabulary



Book. This gives a truer representation of the proportional additions to vocabulary. For Book 1 the figure, naturally is 1.00 (1044 words in the vocabulary of Book 1, 1044 new words). For Book 2, the figure is 0.58 (561 new words divided by the total vocabulary of 961 for Book 2). Again, it could be expected that the ratio of new words to vocabulary used would fall off with each Book and, again, this is the broad trend of Figure 4. The number of exceptions is small, but the figure focuses attention on Book 10 (counter-intuitional rise) and Book 18 (a much smaller ratio than the average of 0.19 for Books 12-17 and 19-20).

Table 2 shows the reduced sample of words that will be used for further analysis. This sample includes all words whose total frequency of use accounts for more than one per cent of the total of 87,696. There are 17 such words, and their frequencies of use in each Book are shown in the table. Overall, these words are used on 30,588 occasions, more than one third of the total of 87,696.

As in Figure 3, the data in Table 2 may be somewhat misleading, as they represent gross usage, without reference to the overall number of words used in each Book. Accordingly, the ratios in Table 3 will be used for further analysis. These represent the use of each of the 17 words, expressed as a frequency per 1000 words of the total in each Book.

The first analysis is a simple identification of the maximum and minimum values for each word in Table 3. There are 17 maxima and 17 minima, a total of 34 extreme values. There are 23 Books and sub-divisions of Books in Table 3. Thus, an average of 1.5 (34/23) extreme values could be expected for each Book. Any large variation from this figure might suggest a different vocabulary pattern. This analysis focuses attention on Book 1 (1 maximum, 7 minima, 8 extreme values in total), Book 12 (1 maximum and 3 minima, 4 extreme values), and Book 14 (4 maxima).

Comparisons using the t-test

The next analysis depends on the t-test, a statistical technique for comparing averages of two sets of figures. The technique is explained in Appendix 7. The test

Table 2
Frequency of use of key words, by Book

	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	Bk 4	Bk 5	Bk 6	Bk 7	Bk 8	Bk 9	Bk 10	Bk 11	Bk 12	Bk 13	Bk 14	15(I)	15(S)	16(I)	16(S)	Bk 17	18(I)	18(S)	Bk 19	Bk 20	Totals
<i>and</i>	197	219	264	241	229	224	210	172	262	326	231	200	270	172	79	96	103	115	321	73	137	261	214	4616
<i>the</i>	119	169	221	194	213	209	194	162	228	288	171	147	192	157	65	93	88	105	300	56	100	191	160	3822
<i>that</i>	167	137	190	197	165	172	156	151	176	196	153	159	219	136	72	65	76	99	260	72	71	205	153	3447
<i>thai</i>	49	92	112	107	63	77	115	72	132	116	95	107	137	160	52	36	41	74	197	50	56	172	79	2191
<i>he</i>	134	107	140	90	138	175	148	112	111	128	92	37	93	52	28	62	57	56	101	34	63	98	103	2159
<i>to</i>	95	75	97	92	82	69	58	61	86	110	87	72	75	60	34	34	41	47	122	26	44	95	84	1646
<i>thar</i>	35	61	66	66	37	54	69	65	95	67	74	77	104	108	36	37	39	49	136	23	58	127	71	1554
<i>his</i>	62	72	85	62	99	79	79	66	126	87	67	31	64	31	22	41	38	37	64	11	35	65	73	1396
<i>in</i>	72	57	62	82	83	61	66	46	70	89	56	54	80	59	28	28	42	44	89	24	33	76	52	1353
<i>thaim</i>	24	41	72	58	38	60	50	55	70	57	73	57	82	71	25	23	23	60	89	14	42	82	27	1193
<i>off</i>	75	70	77	80	73	69	30	44	96	73	65	36	51	47	6	14	18	11	36	12	13	64	52	1112
<i>with</i>	19	42	49	37	48	68	44	45	70	59	59	41	52	46	28	33	29	33	102	22	23	57	57	1063
<i>him</i>	43	64	65	42	56	92	76	40	59	71	41	22	38	23	17	28	25	33	39	17	25	51	57	1024
<i>all</i>	44	45	48	49	47	40	42	35	68	69	62	52	49	53	25	26	30	30	59	19	28	48	50	1018
<i>for</i>	55	44	57	52	52	56	48	35	55	59	53	58	54	35	24	22	24	21	65	16	22	53	53	1013
<i>war</i>	26	43	52	30	34	38	33	46	71	51	50	35	77	73	21	18	19	32	96	25	27	73	41	1011
<i>wes</i>	49	51	54	65	47	38	36	28	46	79	45	20	55	46	23	33	26	26	67	18	20	57	41	970

Keyword total 30588

Book totals 3989 3800 4873 4872 4235 4413 4246 3357 4904 5385 4192 3797 4857 3559 1703 2034 2131 2358 6045 5307 2202 1465 3972 87696

Table 3
Relative frequency (per thousand) of use of key words, by Book

	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	Bk 4	Bk 5	Bk 6	Bk 7	Bk 8	Bk 9	Bk 10	Bk 11	Bk 12	Bk 13	Bk 14	15(I)	15(S)	16(I)	16(S)	Bk 17	18(I)	18(S)	Bk 19	Bk 20
and	49.39	57.63	54.18	49.47	54.07	50.76	49.46	51.24	53.43	60.54	55.10	52.67	55.59	48.33	46.39	47.20	48.33	48.77	53.10	49.83	62.22	49.18	53.88
the	29.83	44.47	45.35	39.82	50.30	47.36	45.69	48.26	46.49	53.48	40.79	38.71	39.53	44.11	38.17	45.72	41.30	44.53	49.63	38.23	45.41	35.99	40.28
that	41.87	36.05	38.99	40.44	38.96	38.98	36.74	44.98	35.89	36.40	36.50	41.88	45.09	38.21	42.28	31.96	35.66	41.98	43.01	49.15	32.24	38.63	38.52
thai	12.28	24.21	22.98	21.96	14.88	17.45	27.08	21.45	26.92	21.54	22.66	28.18	28.21	44.96	30.53	17.70	19.24	31.38	32.59	34.13	25.43	32.41	19.89
he	33.59	28.16	28.73	18.47	32.59	39.66	34.86	33.36	22.63	23.77	21.95	9.74	19.15	14.61	16.44	30.48	26.75	23.75	16.71	23.21	28.61	18.47	25.93
to	23.82	19.74	19.91	18.88	19.36	15.64	13.66	18.17	17.54	20.43	20.75	18.96	15.44	16.86	19.96	16.72	19.24	19.93	20.18	17.75	19.98	17.90	21.15
thar	8.77	16.05	13.54	13.55	8.74	12.24	16.25	19.36	19.37	12.44	17.65	20.28	21.41	30.35	21.14	18.19	18.30	20.78	22.50	15.70	26.34	23.93	17.88
his	15.54	18.95	17.44	12.73	23.38	17.90	18.61	19.66	25.69	16.16	15.98	8.16	13.18	8.71	12.92	20.16	17.83	15.69	10.59	7.51	15.89	12.25	18.38
in	18.05	15.00	12.72	16.83	19.60	13.82	15.54	13.70	14.27	16.53	13.36	14.22	16.47	16.58	16.44	13.77	19.71	18.66	14.72	16.38	14.99	14.32	13.09
thaim	6.02	10.79	14.78	11.90	8.97	13.60	11.78	16.38	14.27	10.58	17.41	15.01	16.88	19.95	14.68	11.31	10.79	25.45	14.72	9.56	19.07	15.45	6.80
off	18.80	18.42	15.80	16.42	17.24	15.64	7.07	13.11	19.58	13.56	15.51	9.48	10.50	13.21	3.52	6.88	8.45	4.66	5.96	8.19	5.90	12.06	13.09
with	4.76	11.05	10.06	7.59	11.33	15.41	10.36	13.40	14.27	10.96	14.07	10.80	10.71	12.92	16.44	16.22	13.61	13.99	16.87	15.02	10.45	10.74	14.35
him	10.78	16.84	13.34	8.62	13.22	20.85	17.90	11.92	12.03	13.18	9.78	5.79	7.82	6.46	9.98	13.77	11.73	13.99	6.45	11.60	11.35	9.61	14.35
all	11.03	11.84	9.85	10.06	11.10	9.06	9.89	10.43	13.87	12.81	14.79	13.70	10.09	14.89	14.68	12.78	14.08	12.72	9.76	12.97	12.72	9.04	12.59
for	13.79	11.58	11.70	10.67	12.28	12.69	11.30	10.43	11.22	10.96	12.64	15.28	11.12	9.83	14.09	10.82	11.26	8.91	10.75	10.92	9.99	9.99	13.34
war	6.52	11.32	10.67	6.16	8.03	8.61	7.77	13.70	14.48	9.47	11.93	9.22	15.85	20.51	12.33	8.85	8.92	13.57	15.88	17.06	12.26	13.76	10.32
wes	12.28	13.42	11.08	13.34	11.10	8.61	8.48	8.34	9.38	14.67	10.73	5.27	11.32	12.92	13.51	16.22	12.20	11.03	11.08	12.29	9.08	10.74	10.32

identifies situations where it may be confidently claimed that a difference in two averages is systematic rather than due to chance (luck). Here, a weighting of 19 to systematic variation against 1 to chance variation (a confidence level of 95%) will be used. If this approach determines that two averages are systematically different, it implies that the two samples are drawn from different populations, i.e. two different vocabulary sets.

Accordingly, Appendix 4 shows a comparison between the averages for Books 1-13 and Books 14-20 (up to and including Bannockburn, afterwards). The statistically significant results are shown below.

	Average frequency of use per 1000, Books 1-13	Average frequency of use per 1000, Books 14-20	t-value
<i>thai</i>	22.29	29.70	-2.54
<i>thar</i>	15.36	22.27	-3.53
<i>his</i>	17.18	13.72	1.74
<i>off</i>	14.70	8.99	3.26
<i>with</i>	11.14	13.90	-2.23
<i>war</i>	10.29	13.78	-2.29

A positive sign on the t-value means that the average for Books 1-13 is higher than that of Books 14-20, and similarly for a negative sign. Further, all t-values shown represent statistically significant differences as they are either greater than 1.73 or less than -1.73 (see Appendix 7). Thus four of the 17 key words (*thai*, *thar*, *with*, *war*) are systematically used with less frequency in Books 1-13 than in Books 14-20. Similarly, two key words (*his*, *off*) are systematically used more frequently. These six systematic variations suggest a different word-use profile in Books 1-13 than in Books 14-20.

The fourth analysis compares the "Scottish" Books [1-13, 15(S), 16(S), 17, 18(S), 19, 20] to the "Irish" Books [14, 15(I), 16(I), 18(I)]. These data and calculations are shown in Appendix 5, and the statistically significant results are:

	Average for Scottish Books	Average for Irish Books	t-value
<i>And</i>	53.05	48.22	2.34
<i>thai</i>	23.64	32.22	-2.35
<i>His</i>	16.65	11.74	2.08
<i>In</i>	15.25	17.28	-1.94
<i>All</i>	11.48	14.15	-2.95
<i>war</i>	10.97	14.71	-2.01

Two words (*and*, *his*) are systematically used more frequently and four (*thai*, *in*, *all*, *war*) less frequently in Scottish than in Irish Books. Again, these six systematic variations suggest a different word-use profile in the Scottish Books compared to the Irish Books. Comparing this to the last analysis, note that Books 1-13 are all Scottish, and that all the Irish Books come in 14-20. Thus some comparability between the two analyses might be expected. There are three words (*thai*, *his*, *war*) common to both, and the arithmetic signs of the t-values are the same in the two analyses. This is an encouraging degree of consistency.

The fifth analysis draws from the total historicity “scores” for each Book laid out in Appendix 6. The average historicity score for the twenty Books of *The Bruce* is 3.92. Nine have less than average scores (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14), and eleven have above average scores (2, 10-13, 15-20). Appendix 6 shows the relative word usage frequency for this categorisation of the twenty books, together with the statistical calculations. The statistically significant results are shown below.

	Books of below-average historicity	Books of above-average historicity	t-value
<i>he</i>	27.82	21.78	2.25
<i>off</i>	15.21	10.65	2.49

Two words (*he*, *off*) are systematically used more frequently in Books of below average historicity. These systematic variations suggest a different word-use profile in Books of below average as opposed to those of above average historicity, but the effect is less dramatic than for the previous *t*-tests.

Cluster analysis

The statistical procedure known as cluster analysis was used to gain further insights into vocabulary variations in *The Bruce*. Cluster analysis is explained in Appendix 8. This technique is designed to organise observed data into meaningful structures, i.e. develop taxonomies. It is ideally suited for defining groups or clusters of objects with maximal homogeneity within the clusters, while also having maximal difference *between* the clusters. It must, however, be used with care, otherwise subjectivity can obscure results¹⁴. Accordingly, two different types of cluster analysis were used, based on two quite different clustering algorithms.

The first procedure is hierarchical in that it produces a tree-like structure (dendrogram) that shows visually the formation of clusters. The data in Table 3 were subjected to hierarchical clustering, and the result is shown in Figure 5. The amalgamation rule selected was “complete linkage”, as this takes account of the greatest separation between any two objects in the cluster. This method performs well when the objects form naturally distinct groups. The distance measure used here was “1–Pearson r”, an appropriate measure to employ in conjunction with “complete linkage”, and one that adequately weights outliers (an outlier is a single object with a large separation from all others in the sample).

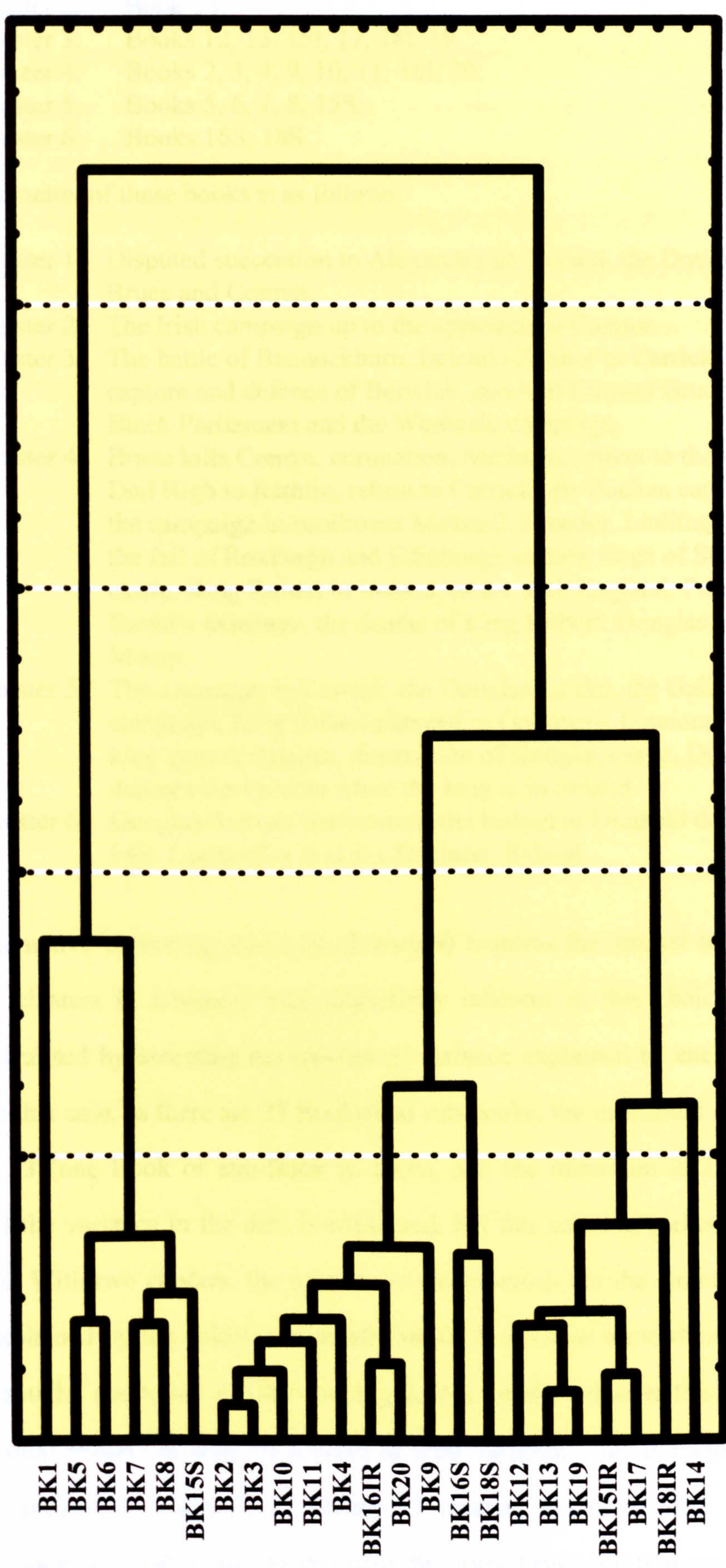
Figure 5 illustrates clearly that there are six clusters in the data. The horizontal scale, “Linkage Distance” gives a measure of how similar to one another are the Books in the various clusters, and how different one cluster is from all others. Thus, the two most similar objects are Book 2 and Book 3, as they form a linkage at 0.012 on the “Linkage Distance” scale. Similarly, Book 1 is most dissimilar to all others, as it forms its first linkage at 0.18 (i.e. 15 times the linkage distance for Books 2 and 3). Book 14 is also highly dissimilar, as it forms its first linkage at 0.12 (10 times the linkage distance for Books 2 and 3). Thus, the six clusters in Figure 5 are:

¹⁴ Hair, J.F. Jr., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L. and Black, W.C., *Multivariate Data Analysis*, (5th edition), New Jersey, 1998, p. 468.

Figure 5

Tree Diagram for Variables

**Complete Linkage
1-Pearson r**



0.0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5

Linkage Distance

- Cluster 1: Book 1
- Cluster 2: Book 14
- Cluster 3: Books 12, 13, 15I, 17, 18I, 19.
- Cluster 4: Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16I, 20.
- Cluster 5: Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15S.
- Cluster 6: Books 16S, 18S.

The subject matter of these books is as follows:

- Cluster 1: Disputed succession to Alexander III, Balliol, the Douglases, Bruce and Comyn.
- Cluster 2: The Irish campaign up to the approach to Connor.
- Cluster 3: The battle of Bannockburn, Ireland (Connor to Carrickfergus), capture and defence of Berwick, death of Edward Bruce, the Black Parliament and the Weardale campaign.
- Cluster 4: Bruce kills Comyn, coronation, Methven, retreat to the north, Dail Righ to Rathlin, return to Carrick, the Buchan campaign, the campaign in southwest Scotland, Brander, Linlithgow Peel, the fall of Roxburgh and Edinburgh castles, siege of Stirling castle, King Robert in Ireland, peace with England, Prince David's marriage, the deaths of King Robert, Douglas and Moray.
- Cluster 5: The campaign in Carrick, the Douglas Larder, the Galloway campaign, King Robert pursued in Galloway, Loudoun Hill, the king goes to Buchan, destruction of Douglas castle, Douglas defends the borders while the king is in Ireland.
- Cluster 6: Douglas defends the borders, the bishop of Dunkeld defends Fife, Caernarfon invades Scotland, Byland.

The alternative clustering algorithm (k-means) requires the analyst to state the number of clusters in advance. The subjectivity inherent in this choice may be largely neutralised by assessing the amount of variance explained by each possible solution. In this case, as there are 23 Books and sub-books, the maximum number of clusters is 23 (one Book or sub-Book in each), and the minimum is 2. With 23 clusters, all the variance in the data is explained, but this solution yields no useful information. With two clusters, the solution is dichotomous but the amount of total variance explained by the solution is small (36%). A solution somewhere between the two is sought, and a pair of inter-locking guides usually achieves this. First, the solution should explain at least 60 percent of total variance. This is established by examining successive solutions (2-cluster, 3-cluster, 4-cluster etc.) until the appropriate solution is identified. In this case, the five-cluster solution explained 56

percent of total variance, while the six-cluster solution explained 62 percent. Second, solutions are examined in descending order till the point is reached where clusters are stable (contain the same members in successive solution, allowing for an incremental cluster member at each stage, and ensuring that outliers (in this case, Books 1 and 14) are not forced into clusters. Again, this approach yielded a six-cluster solution (see Appendix 9). In addition, the six-cluster solution for non-hierarchical (k-means) clustering was found to be exactly the same as that derived for the hierarchical algorithm (above):

- Cluster 1: Book 1
- Cluster 2: Book 14
- Cluster 3: Books 12, 13, 15I, 17, 18I, 19.
- Cluster 4: Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16I, 20.
- Cluster 5: Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15S.
- Cluster 6: Books 16S, 18S.

The robust nature of the six-cluster solution suggests that it could be used as the basis for comparison with previous analyses in this chapter. Figures 3 and 4 focused attention on Books 10 and 18 but, as this was not reflected in any other analysis, the result is set aside as ephemeral. Tables 1 and 2 focused attention of Books 1,12 and 14. The result for Book 12 was not reflected in other analyses, and is set aside. The result for Books 1 and 14, however, is reflected directly in the six-cluster solutions, for they appear there as clusters 1 and 2.

Duncan¹⁵ proposed that Books 1-13 were written separately from Books 14-20, though he clearly assumes that Barbour wrote both sections. The second analysis (above) showed significantly different relative frequencies of use of six of the 17 basic words across these categories, suggesting that there may be some basis to Duncan's suggestion. There are 13 objects (Books) in the first category and ten (Books and sub-Books) in the second. If Duncan is wrong, then the objects within each cluster should occur in the ratio 13:10 with respect to the groupings Book 1-13 and Books 14-20. The ratios are as follows:

¹⁵ Duncan, *Bruce*, pp. 8-9.

Cluster 1	1:0	Cluster 4:	6:2
Cluster 2	1:0	Cluster 5:	4:1
Cluster 3	2:4	Cluster 6:	0:2

These ratios are so different from the expected 13:10 that we must suspect that some systematic effect is at work. There appears to be some difference between Books 1-13 and Books 14-20. This may be due to a gap between the writing tasks (as Duncan suggests) or to some other factor. In either case, the results of the t-tests are borne out in part by the six-cluster solution.

The t-tests for differences between “Scottish” and “Irish” Books were significant for six of the 17 basic words, suggesting some systematic difference. Using the same reasoning as above, we would expect membership of each cluster to divide into the ratio 19:4 (4.75:1) if there was no systematic difference. The ratios are:

Cluster 1	1:0	Cluster 4:	7:1
Cluster 2	1:0	Cluster 5:	4:1
Cluster 3	4:2	Cluster 6:	2:0

Cluster 5 is similar, but the others are significantly dissimilar to suggest some systematic effect. Thus the result of the Scottish/Irish analysis is consistent with the six-cluster solution, as is Duncan’s suggestion relating to Books 1-13 and Books 14-20. Note, also, that the Scottish/Irish conundrum may be subsumed within the notion of a division at the end of Book 13, as all Irish material falls within Books 14-20.

The t-tests based on level of historicity also indicated that some systematic effect might be at work. The overall mean for historicity, on a 0-6 scale, is 3.92 with a standard deviation of 1.84 (see Appendix 3). The level of historicity for each of the clusters is as follows:

Cluster 1	3.8	Cluster 4:	4.0
Cluster 2	3.8	Cluster 5:	2.6
Cluster 3	4.3	Cluster 6:	5.0

Since five of these six scores vary from the mean (3.92) by less than half of a standard deviation (0.92), and the sixth (cluster 6) is only just outside this range,

variations in the level of historicity do not seem to affect the outcome of the six-cluster solution.

Evaluation and discussion of word analysis

It is appropriate first to assess whether *The Bruce* was written by Barbour, or by Barbour and others. It may be accepted from the evidence led above that Barbour was deeply involved in the authorship of the poem, even if it was written at two separate times. Also, the question of single or multiple authorship, while unlikely to impact on the overall level of historicity, may throw some light on some of the dimensions of historicity.

Although the notion that Barbour may not be the sole author of *The Bruce* has been aired only once and briefly (see footnote 2 to this chapter), single authorship of medieval chronicles may have been the exception rather than the rule. As Mapstone notes¹⁶:

“Indeed, Bower’s own comments¹⁷ on the composition of chronicles at the very end of the *Scotichronicon* itself reveal a conception of the authorship of this kind of work as an essentially communal exercise. Ideally, writes Bower, each monastery in a kingdom would appoint a scribe or writer....who would ‘make a dated record of all noteworthy things during a king’s reign’, and then at the first general council after a king’s death ‘all the annalists should meet and produce openly their sworn statements or writings’. The council would then appoint wise men to collate these writings, summarise them and ‘compile a chronicle’....Bower is actually making a contrast between how he thinks a chronicle should ideally be put together and the difficulties that he has had in assembling the *Scotichronicon* from a variety of written and oral sources.”

The rigorous cluster analysis carried out earlier concluded, on the basis of usage of 17 key words (prepositions, personal pronouns, conjunctions) that make up over a third of the poem, that there are six separate groups of Books. First is a single-object cluster consisting of Book 1. Second is a single-object cluster consisting of Book 14.

¹⁶ Mapstone, Sally, “The *Scotichronicon*’s First Readers”, in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, Barbara E. Crawford (ed.), Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 31-55.

¹⁷ See Bower, *Scotichronicon*, VIII, p. 339.

Then there is a cluster of six objects comprising Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I) and 19. Fourth is a large cluster of eight objects including Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16(I), 20. Next is a five-object cluster consisting of Books 5, 6, 7, 8 and 15(S). Finally, there is a cluster of two objects – Books 16(S) and 18(S). The division of the poem into Books, carried out by Pinkerton in 1856, is somewhat arbitrary, as was indicated previously. This should make us somewhat wary of an analysis carried out on the basis of his subdivision. However, the cluster analysis and other supporting evidence do lead to the obvious postulate that there were six, not one, co-authors at work. The only other possibility, which may also entail systematic variation, is that there are differences in the nature of the subject matter. This is evaluated in the next section, and with reference to Appendix 10, which sets out the subject matter of each Book.

Linking subject matter of books with “authorship” clusters

The subject matter and treatment of Book 1 are different to all other Books. It would be reasonable to hypothesise a link between content and cluster membership in this case. Skirmishes, low-level actions, and non-major sieges are involved in all Books except 1, 12, 13 and 17. In terms of a link between content and cluster membership, it could be said that lack of skirmishing is common to three members of cluster 2 (Books 12, 13, 17). However, skirmishing is present in the other three Books of cluster 2 (15(I), 18(I), 19), so the link is weak or non-existent.

Set battles and other major actions are involved in Books 8, 12, 13, 14, 15(I), 17, 18(I), 18(S), 19. Cluster 2 contains Book 14 (only). Cluster 3 contains Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I), and 19 from the above list; this looks like a strong case for a link between content and cluster membership.

Contextual descriptive material features significantly in Books 4, 11, 15(S), 16(I), 18(S), 19, and 20. Cluster 4 contains four Books in this list, but its other four Books do not feature this type of material strongly. Cluster 6 has only two objects (Books 16(S), 18(S)), but only one appears in the foregoing list. Thus, no case can be made here for a linkage between content and cluster membership.

Women feature in Books 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 16(I). Cluster 4 has four Books (2, 3, 4, 16(I)) on this list, but the other four are not. Similarly with Cluster 5; two Books (7, 8) are in the list, but three are not. Accordingly, there is no evidence here of a linkage between content and cluster membership.

Allusions (often classical) and reflection occur significantly in Books 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 20. Six of the eight Books in cluster 4 (2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 20) are included in this list, supporting the notion of a link between content and cluster membership. Two members of cluster 5 (Books 6, 8) are on this list, but three are not (Books 5, 7, 15(S)); this gives no support for the supposed linkage.

Character descriptions/evaluations occur in Books 8, 10, 16, and 17. Morale-related passages occur in Books 3, 11 and 12. In neither case is it possible to argue for the proposed linkage.

The analysis of proposed linkages can be summarised as follows:

Book 1 different to all other Books in subject matter and treatment.	Linkage between content and cluster membership is confirmed.
Content – skirmishes, low-level actions, and non-major sieges.	Linkage weak or non-existent
Content – set battles and other major actions.	Strong linkage.
Content – contextual descriptive material.	No linkage.
Content – women.	No linkage.
Content – classical and other allusions.	No linkage.
Content – character descriptions, and evaluations	No linkage

Thus, of all the types of content analysed a good case for a linkage between content and cluster membership can only be argued in two instances. For all other cases no strong link is evident. It must therefore be concluded, overall, that there is little systematic linkage between content and cluster membership. This conclusion puts more emphasis on the alternative hypothesis, that the clusters signify some significant variance in authorship.

Cluster analysis and multi-authorship

It has been noted that Book 1 stands alone in terms of nature of content and purpose (it is the introductory Book). It is possible that the nature of this Book could override systematic difference in word-usage indicated by the clustering result. The conservative conclusion would be that Barbour could have written this Book, as well as those in another cluster, despite the difference in word-usage profiles. However, this would be completely unjustified in terms of the clustering diagram in Figure 5. Book 14 may also be an introductory one (to the second part of the poem, supposedly written at a later date to Books 1-13). It would be difficult to argue that it had the same author as most other clusters, including the one-object cluster 1 (Book 1) because it is so structurally different (see Figure 5) apart, possibly, from cluster 3 (Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I) and 19). More likely, though, cluster 3 was written by a separate author who had (or could access) specialist knowledge on major battles, sieges and actions. Perhaps it could be argued that Barbour wrote the Books in cluster 4 (Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16(I), 20); these carry the king's actions as a strong part of the developing theme of the poem, together with the final Book which Barbour would probably claim for himself. Similarly, cluster 6 (Books 16(S), 18(S)) may have been written by another author with specialist knowledge (or sources) of actions that involved Sir James Douglas. Note, however, that this cluster is closer to Barbour's cluster (3) than to any other (see Figure 5). It may be unreasonable to argue that Barbour absolutely did not write this material. Finally, it may be suggested that cluster 5 (Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15(S)) was written by an author with knowledge of campaigns in the south of Scotland.

Thus four or five separate authors are suggested. Barbour may have written cluster 4 (Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16(I), 20), and possibly cluster 6 (Books 16(S), 18(S)). Author 2 may have written cluster 1 (Book 1). Author 3 may have written cluster 2 (Book 14). Author 4 may have written cluster 3 (Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I), 19), but may also be the writer of Book 14. Author 5 may have written cluster 5 (Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15(S)). It is not suggested that these authors worked

independently, but rather, under the overall “editorship” of John Barbour. Mapstone¹⁸ suggests that something very similar may have happened after Bower’s death: “....some of it could have been added or collated by some kind of medieval editorial team associated at Inchcolm with the *Scotichronicon*”.

Note that, if the multiple-author hypothesis is supported, it offers some explanation for Duncan’s contention that Barbour’s chronology of the four separate Irish campaigns (1315, 1315/16, 1317, 1318) is confused. Three separate authors may have written the Irish material. As Barbour wrote the least part of this material (Book 16(I)), it may have been that his knowledge of the overall initiative in Ireland was not strong enough to exert corrective editorship. This factor may also explain other apparent confusions in *The Bruce*, and these are considered in Chapter 10.

Conclusion

This chapter has carried out three levels of tests to evaluate the likelihood that John Barbour was the sole author of *The Bruce*. The progressive addition of previously unused words highlighted a counter-trend rise for Book 10, and counter-trend reductions for Books 12 and 18. Seventeen key words were selected as the basis for further analysis. These were the most-used words in the poem. Each accounted individually for at least one percent of the total of 87,696; taken together, they accounted for more than a third of the total number of words. An analysis of the maximum and minimum usages of each word across the 23 Books and subdivisions of Books focused some attention on Books 1, 12 and 14. Overall, these two basic analyses provided a suggestion that different writing styles may be present, particularly in Book 12, but perhaps also in Books 1, 14 and 18. This provides a new perspective on the customary assumption of single authorship of *The Bruce*.

The t-tests gave some further suggestion of multiple authorship. Books 1-13 had statistically significant differences in the usage of six of the seventeen key words

¹⁸ Mapstone, *First Readers*, p. 34.

compared to the post-Bannockburn Books 14-20. A similar result was obtained by comparing the Scottish Books with the Irish Books. There was a weaker result obtained (two of the key words involved) by comparing lower- with higher-historicity Books. In these analyses, the words *thai*, *his* and *war* seemed to be particularly powerful differentiators. Together with the results discussed in the previous paragraph, the t-tests cast further (though not yet conclusive) doubt on single authorship of the poem.

Cluster analysis gave the most powerful indication that *The Bruce* is the work of more than one author. Two very different clustering algorithms produced identical six-cluster solutions. This is an unusually powerful outcome, whose significance should neither be under- or over-estimated. It provides a strong initial rationale for claiming that John Barbour's was not the only hand at work. There appear to be six distinguishable writing styles, corresponding to six different usage types of the seventeen key words. This suggests up to six sub-authors, though they would probably be working under some kind of general editorial control.

There was a strong linkage between content and cluster membership only in the case of set battles and other major actions. These figure prominently in cluster 2 (Book 14) and in cluster 3 (Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I), 19). Otherwise, no association could be identified between the content of Books and cluster membership.

As a minimum, Figure 5 indicates that clusters 1 (Book 1 – introductory material) and 5 (Books 5,6,7,8, 15(S) – campaigns in the south of Scotland) are substantially different from the others, and from one another, suggesting at least three sub-authors other than John Barbour.

The multi-authorship hypothesis (which, as noted above, may explain some of the historiographical weaknesses of *The Bruce*) is substantial and well founded. The following summary assumes that Barbour himself wrote those Books that recorded King Robert's important deeds and sketched out the overall theme of the poem.

Written by Barbour

Cluster 4:	Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16(I), 20 King Robert's deeds	Mean historicity level – 3.6
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Perhaps written by Barbour

Cluster 6:	Books 16(S), 18(S) Deeds of Sir James Douglas	Mean historicity level – 3.6
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Probably not written by Barbour

Cluster 2:	Book 14 Sir Edward Bruce in Ireland	Mean historicity level – 3.6
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Cluster 3:	Books 12, 13, 15(I), 17, 18(I), 19 Set battles and other major actions	Mean historicity level – 4.1
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Definitely not written by Barbour

Cluster 1:	Book 1 Introduction, scene-setting	Mean historicity level – 3.3
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Cluster 5:	Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15(S) Campaigns in the south of Scotland	Mean historicity level – 3.7
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The cluster analysis results are very powerful indeed, and overshadow the tentative conclusions drawn in the two paragraphs at the start of this section. These earlier results seem to be subsumed within the cluster solution, though they did highlight the differentiated nature of Books 1 and 14. Overall, then, the robust six-cluster solution, supported by some other elements of evidence, refutes the view that John Barbour wrote *The Bruce* by himself.

Chapter 9

Bannockburn with Barbour

“Barbour gives to students of military history
a remarkably sound and consistent account of the events of Bannockburn¹.”

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a narrative of the battle of Bannockburn, based on all sources but Barbour, but adding source material from *The Bruce* where the analyses of Chapters 4-7 suggest that this is appropriate. The “all sources but Barbour” material is shown in italic typeface below, to distinguish it from the additional material from *The Bruce*. Comparison between the two levels narrative developed in this chapter will indicate the extent to which historians may and do rely on *The Bruce* to develop a reasonable understanding of the battle of Bannockburn. By extension, this comparison may also indicate the utility of *The Bruce* as a source for the period 1306-29.

The battle of Bannockburn has been chosen as the model event for comparison because, of all the major events in the first War of Independence, it has the richest coverage provided by historical sources. If *The Bruce* is needed to make sense of Bannockburn, it might be reasonable to adduce its substantial utility for the interpretation of other events. As before, the principal sources used in this chapter are Bower’s *Scotichronicon*, the *Chronicle of Lanercost*, Gray’s *Scalacronica*, *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, and the account of Friar Baston. Other sources will be introduced where appropriate, particularly *Annales Edwardi Secundi* by John de Trokelowe and the *Chronicon* of Geoffrey le Baker. Book and line references for material from *The Bruce* will be given as appropriate.

¹ Christison, Philip, “Bannockburn – 23rd and 24th June 1314: A Study in Military History”, *Proceedings of the Glasgow Archaeological Society*, 1956-57, p. 173.

Bannockburn narrative

Over the period that the king, William Bunnock, *the earl of Moray and James Douglas were besieging and taking Perth, Linlithgow Peel, Edinburgh and Roxburgh Castles respectively*, Sir Edward Bruce had done the same in Galloway and Nithsdale. He may also have reduced the fortifications at Rutherglen and Dundee (*The Bruce*, Book X, lines 793-809).

He then moved on to Stirling, where Sir Philip Mowbray kept the castle for the English. This siege did not involve much action, though Edward was there for some time, from Lent to just before midsummer, 1313. At that point, Mowbray negotiated a truce, as he was beginning to run short of food. *If an English force did not relieve the castle within a year from the coming midsummer (i.e. by midsummer 1314), it would be surrendered to the Scots* (X, 810-828).

After the truce was agreed, Sir Philip Mowbray rode into England to inform Caernarfon of its terms. Caernarfon was pleased with the news, as it committed the Scots to battle by a fixed day, which also gave him ample time to prepare. In such circumstances, he believed that no power could stand against him. His magnates also believed the Scots had erred in naming a fixed day, and believed the English would win the battle (XI, 1-20).

Initially, King Robert was displeased to hear of the truce, realising the folly of giving so much notice to so powerful an adversary. Fortified, no doubt, by the response of his magnates, the king resolved to rebuff an English effort to relieve Stirling. The intervening period was used to collect and train an army, and to procure weapons, armour and other necessary supplies (XI, 31-68).

Motivated by this truce, and perhaps by the fall of other castles, Caernarfon summoned his magnates and levies to relieve Stirling. As the truce period drew to a close, he had mustered a large army. Apart from his own chivalry, he had men from Brittany, Poitou, Aquitaine, Bayonne, Guelders, Bohemia, Holland, France, Germany, Boulogne, Gascony, Flanders, Zeeland, Brabant, Ireland and Wales. The count of Hainault came with his own men and levies from Gascony and Germany.

The English king was even able to muster a contingent of disaffected Scots (XI, 69-104).

Caernarfon travelled from the Isle of Ely via Lincoln, York and Newcastle upon Tyne. By 26 May 1314, he was approaching the Scottish border accompanied by the earls of Gloucester, Hereford, Pembroke and Angus (English creation), Sir Robert Clifford, Sir John Comyn (son of the Red Comyn), Sir Henry Beaumont, Sir John Seagrave, Sir Pagan Typtoft, Sir Edmund Mauley, and Sir Ingram Umfraville. Hugh Despenser also accompanied Caernarfon. The earls of Lancaster, Warenne, Warwick and Arundel did not come, since Caernarfon had not implemented the Articles, as promised.

The main English muster took place at Berwick until 17 June, where Caernarfon reviewed his army. Anticipating victory, he partitioned Scotland in advance, rewarding his supporters in advance with lands. On the advice of his magnates, he organised his army into ten divisions, each led by a capable commander. Caernarfon also organised his own division, putting at his reins the trusted Sir Giles d'Argentin and Sir Aymer de Valence (earl of Pembroke) (XI, 142-186).

The army that set out from Berwick on 17 June 1314 was very large indeed. Barbour overstates the numbers of English, but it is clear that they greatly outnumbered the Scots, perhaps by three to one. He gives a figure of three thousand for heavy cavalry, however, which approximates the estimate in Vita of "more than two thousand" (XI, 107-119).

As they moved north, they made a very impressive display. Indeed, the baggage train alone suggested that the army was very large; if placed from end to end, it would have spread over twenty leagues. As well as the normal campaign gear and provisions, they brought much other equipment and furnishings (including gold and silver) (XI, 121-141 and 192-205).

King Robert mustered his men in the Torwood. Sir Edward Bruce, Walter Stewart, James Douglas and the earl of Moray all brought their contingents. Many of

their followers were well-experienced men. As the various parties came in, the king in person welcomed them. (XI, 211-270).

Pembroke was sent ahead from Berwick to scout and prepare Caernarfon's route into Scotland. The English host made its way to Edinburgh. *Meanwhile, the king sent his scouts to keep track of the English army.* James Douglas and Sir Robert Keith (the hereditary marshal) carried out one of these scouting sorties. Their report of the approaching English was probably not accurately relayed to the Scottish host, to preserve morale (XI, 461-504).

With his army fully mustered in the Torwood, King Robert explained his tactics to his commanders. The English had to relieve the castle, and the Scots had to frustrate them in this aim. They would move to the New Park and block the way the English must pass. If the English tried to by-pass the Park by going around and below on the carse, the lighter-armoured Scots would have the advantage. He divided the army into four divisions to be commanded by the earl of Moray (in the vanguard), Sir Edward Bruce, Walter Stewart and James Douglas jointly, and the king himself (in the rearward). King Robert's division would include the men of Carrick, probably the men of Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles (led by Angus of Islay), and a contingent from the Lowlands (XI, 211-346).

As the English were much stronger in heavy cavalry, the Scots would fight on foot. This would give the Scots the advantage over heavy cavalry if the battle were fought on the carse. They would also have a different advantage if the battle were fought in the Park, as horsemen always have difficulty with trees. When he heard that the English were at Edinburgh, King Robert moved his army to the New Park, led by the earl of Moray's vanguard, with his own division bringing up the rear (XI, 278-308 and 347-354).

As the English army advanced towards Stirling on Saturday 22 June, the Scots placed stakes in pits covered by wattle and grass, over which infantrymen might walk, but which would tumble the English destriers. These were laid beside the road

in the New Park, situated where the English cavalry would have to pass on the way to the castle. The pits were a foot in diameter and two feet deep (XI, 355-380).

Caernarfon marched straight to battle in state and great pomp, unlike his father who always visited shrines and holy places on the march. The English approached Stirling by long marches, with only brief halts for sleep and provisioning. They arrived near Torwood on Sunday 23 June.

On Sunday morning the Scots heard Mass, after which King Robert inspected the pits that had been prepared. He called his men to arms and addressed them about the struggle for freedom. Those who had no heart for the battle should depart forthwith. Those that remained should “tak the ure that God wold send”. He sent his baggage train and provisions out of the Park. His scouts told him that the English had spent the previous night at Falkirk. As they approached, he made his final dispositions. Moray would guard the road to the castle at St. Ninian’s Kirk, while the king’s own division would guard the entry to the Park. The other two divisions were to stand by and give assistance where necessary (XI, 381-460).

At this point, Sir Philip Mowbray came out from Stirling to tell Caernarfon that he had done enough technically to relieve the castle. Mowbray also brought information that the Scots had blocked the narrow roads in the forest.

A troop of heavy cavalry, perhaps 300 strong, under Sir Robert Clifford, *Sir Henry Beaumont* and a third banneret, *set out for the castle*, avoiding the New Park and going well beneath St. Ninian’s. Their purpose was to make contact with the castle garrison, and to threaten the Scots from the rear. Moray initially missed this troop movement, but was alerted by the king. With five hundred spearmen, *Moray hurried down to the dry ground beneath St. Ninian’s to engage the English cavalry. The English commanders waited till the Scots had formed up, then charged, perhaps with insufficient discipline. Sir William Daincourt was killed in the first rush, and Sir Thomas Gray was captured. Sir Reginald Daincourt, brother to Sir William, was also killed at some point during the battle.* Now, with better discipline, the whole cavalry force attacked Moray’s spearmen, surrounding and attacking them on every

side. The spearmen attacked the English horses, their riders being tumbled and subsequently killed. There was an exchange of projectile weapons, but the Scots schiltrom held. The midsummer sun's heat made all the combatants sweat, and the dust from the feet of men and horses darkened the air around the struggle (Book XI, 521-633).

At this point, James Douglas approached the king for permission to go to Moray's aid. This was the task the king had set for Douglas's division but, in the stress of the moment, he initially refused to change his line of battle. Douglas persisted, and the king relented. Moray's men were tiring, though they had killed a number of the enemy. Clifford's cavalry fell back somewhat when they saw Douglas's reinforcements approach, Douglas, taking this as a sign that Moray was in the ascendant, stopped his force and left Moray to win the struggle and take the credit. Taking advantage of the confusion, Moray's spearmen attacked the English cavalry with such vigour that they scattered in disorder, leaving dead comrades and horses behind. Some rode to the castle, some returned to the main English army. Those that were overtaken were killed. Taking off their basinets to cool down, Moray's spearmen returned to their positions and were praised by the king. They had lost only one man in the struggle. (XI, 634-662; XII, 87-170).

After Sir Philip Mowbray's consultation with Caernarfon, and while Clifford's troop was making its way toward the castle, the main English force approached from the Torwood. They stopped while Caernarfon took advice about whether to bivouac for the night or seek battle immediately. *Gloucester and Hereford had quarrelled about the leadership of the vanguard* and, perhaps because of this, were unaware of the stop for tactical discussion. Instead, the English van proceeded up the road into the Park entry, no doubt impeded by the pits in the softer ground off the road. Aware of this development, the king had his division ready, *though they may have looked less than organised to the approaching English cavalry*. The king was riding around the entry on a small horse, waving an axe to indicate where his men should position

themselves. He wore a leather basinet for protection and a crown for identification (XII, 1-24).

Hereford's cousin, *Sir Henry de Bohun*, had moved a bowshot ahead of the vanguard. He was well armoured and horsed, and carried a spear. He *spotted the king and decided to try to capture or kill him*. As he sped forward, *King Robert* stood in his stirrups *and killed de Bohun with an axe-blow to the head*. *Sir Henry's squire was also killed in the action that followed*. The king's division, assisted by Sir Edward's, attacked the English vanguard, killing some while the remainder fled back to the main army. *The Scots pits may have impeded the cavalry attack*. The king's commanders criticised him for engaging so strong a knight at such a disadvantage, risking the whole Scots cause. The king merely regretted the loss of his axe-shaft, smashed by the blow delivered to de Bohun (XII, 1-98).

At the end of the first day, the king addressed his men, saying that they had made a good start and, if they were willing, they could finish the task on the next day. They had right on their side. God was with them, they were fighting for their own land and its freedom, and they were defending the lives of their families as well as their own (XII, 171-334).

The English were discouraged by the two defeats suffered on the first day, and by the loss of leaders and men. They grumbled among themselves and lost heart, drinking and carousing despite the efforts of their commanders to maintain morale (XII, 335-387). *The overall result of the first day's action was that the Scots grew bolder, while a slow panic began among the English*.

Caernarfon's councillors advised him not to fight before morning unless attacked. Accordingly, *the English now left the road through the wood, and started to cross the Bannockburn, moving on to the carse near the river Forth*. Here, they *bivouacked for the night*, cleaning their equipment and preparing for battle in the morning. *It was a sleepless night, as they expected the Scots to attack*. In addition, the burns in the carse made movement difficult. However, before daybreak they had all passed over the Bannockburn and were ready to give battle (XII, 388-408).

In the wood, the Scots were satisfied with the day's action and were considering striking camp and moving toward Lennox when Sir Alexander Seton, who had just deserted the English camp, approached King Robert. He advised the king to attack suddenly in the morning as the English were demoralised. The Scots decided to fight again on the second day.

Overnight, the earl of Atholl attacked the Scots provisions depot at Cambuskenneth Abbey and killed many of the guard, including its leader Sir William Airth. Atholl had only lately come in to the king's peace, and may have reverted to the English side due to disharmony with Sir Edward Bruce. As punishment, the king banished Atholl to England and seized his land (XIII, 492-504).

In the morning, the Scots heard Mass, breakfasted, and drew up their divisions. King Robert knighted a number of his followers including Walter Stewart and James Douglas. Then they took the field in divisions, advancing in echelon, *to the surprise of the English. The Scots were all on foot, though there may have been some cavalry.* Caernarfon's force was disordered, appearing as one division, except for the vanguard. *As normal, the English cavalry prepared to fight mounted. They had remained armed and in harness all night.* Caernarfon could hardly believe that the Scots meant to fight, but was quickly convinced by Sir Ingram Umfraville. As the distance between the armies decreased, trumpets and bugles were blown, and standards were waved. *The Scots army approached, and they all fell on their knees to pray. The English at first thought this was a sign of surrender, but were disabused of this notion by Sir Ingram Umfraville. Experienced campaigners, probably including Umfraville, suggested delaying tactics. Perhaps acting on the incitement of younger knights, Caernarfon would have none of it. The earl of Gloucester, in particular, was accused of treachery and deceit by Caernarfon for advising delay.* Perhaps because of this, the English vanguard attacked somewhat intemperately and fell on Sir Edward Bruce's division. The opponents met with a

smash of spears; many men and horses were killed (XII, 409-532). Gloucester himself played a particularly active and aggressive role in opposing the Scots attack.

Moray's division now joined the action alongside Sir Edward Bruce. Again, the result was crashing of spears, horses impaled and soldiers killed. In like manner, the division lead by Sir Walter Stewart and Sir James Douglas fell in beside Moray's, and the killing continued. The three Scottish divisions were now struggling side by side. The fighting was prolonged; blows and grunts were the only sounds to be heard (XII, 533-590; XIII, 1-40).

In this early action, many English magnates were killed including earl of Gloucester, Sir John Comyn, Sir Pagan Typtoft, Sir Robert Clifford, Sir William Marshall and Sir John Grey.

There was little movement in this struggle, so the English second and third lines could not engage the Scots. A number of archers did manage to get themselves into position, and poured an increasingly deadly shower of arrows into the Scots ranks. At this point, the king directed his marischal, Sir Robert Keith, and his five hundred light cavalry to attack the English archers with spears and drive them from the field. They took the unarmoured archers in the flank, killing many and scattering the remainder. This allowed the Scottish archers back into the battle. Without fear of response from what had been a much larger English archery force, they now killed so many enemy horsemen that they believed that they could win the battle by themselves (XIII, 41-88).

The fleeing English archers collided with those other archers who had not yet been able to play a part. The fear of the latter transmitted itself to the former, and they played no further effective part in the battle (XIII, 89-112).

King Robert now threw his own reserve schiltrom into the fray, so that all four divisions were then fighting in one line. The Scots archers continued to shoot among the English, and the infantry continued to press forward relentlessly shouting "on thaim, on thaim, on thaim, thai faile". At this point, the Scottish baggage men and camp followers may have started to come on to the field in search of plunder. If so,

they could only have added to the turmoil among the English. The English archers, disorganised and now to the rear, were obliged to shoot their arrows into the air to avoid hitting their own cavalry, but these fell uselessly on the helmets of their enemies. The Scots pressed again, and the English army began to break up (XIII, 113-281).

Seeing the day was lost, Sir Aymer de Valence led Caernarfon (who fought bravely as he went) from the battlefield, escorted by his personal bodyguard of five hundred cavalry, making for the castle. Seeing Caernarfon safely away from the immediate conflict, Sir Giles d'Argentin charged into Sir Edward Bruce's division and was killed. His death was mourned on both sides, as he was recognised as a valorous fighter, having fought in three campaigns against the Saracens (XIII, 282-327).

Now the English army collapsed completely and they were pushed back into the Bannockburn and the river Forth. Part of the Bannockburn was so filled with the bodies of dead soldiers and horses that others could pass over it dry-footed. The number of English killed during this first stage of flight was great, with even the Scots camp followers joining in the slaughter. Certain parts of the Bannockburn could not be forded because of the mud. Those who tried to cross were either drowned, or killed when they turned to make a stand (XIII, 328-358).

Caernarfon's destrier had been piked, so he was remounted and led towards Stirling castle. Sir Philip Mowbray refused entry to Caernarfon's party, pointing out that the castle could not hold out against the Scots. He advised the English to ride around the Park and effect an escape. Guided by a Scottish knight, Caernarfon's party (including Beaumont and Despenser) fled by the Round Table, around the New Park toward Linlithgow. Sir James Douglas and a force of only sixty Scots horsemen hotly pursued them, though Sir Laurence Abernethy joined the Scots in the Torwood. He had been on his way to the battle to fight on the English side, but quickly switched when he heard of the outcome. By the time they had passed Linlithgow, the Scots were in shouting range of Caernarfon's party, but could not

attack them because of their small numbers. However, they harassed the English all the way through Lothian to Dunbar, where the earl of March gave Caernarfon refuge in his castle. Caernarfon then escaped to Berwick by boat. Sir James Douglas returned to the king, frustrated (XIII, 359-394 and 551-634).

Perhaps the main reason behind Caernarfon's escape was that the Scots on the battlefield began to gather plunder as soon as the struggle was over. They seized hostages, gold, silver, armour and other booty. *In all, the plunder gathered on and around the battlefield may have amounted to £200,000.* Two hundred pairs of red spurs were taken from dead English knights. A large number of English fugitives fled to the castle rock. When the booty had been seized, King Robert attacked them, but they surrendered without a fight (XIII, 440-468).

The earls of Hereford and Angus, Sir John Seagrave, Sir Antony Lucy and Sir Ingram Umfraville with many other knights, six hundred other mounted men-at-arms and one thousand foot fled south towards Carlisle. They stopped at Bothwell Castle, then wardened for the English by a Scot, Sir Walter Gilbertson. The latter admitted Hereford and fifty other lords to the castle and put them in custody. The rest of the party set out for Carlisle, but up to three quarters were killed or captured on the way. Sir Edward Bruce was despatched to Bothwell to bring the prisoners to King Robert. Hereford was exchanged for the queen, Marjory Bruce and Bishop Wishart of Glasgow. Other prisoners were ransomed for money (XIII, 401-416 and 679-697).

The earl of Pembroke and Sir Maurice Berkeley, accompanied by a large party of Welsh soldiers, left the battlefield on foot. Some made their way safely back to England, but many were killed and captured (XIII, 417-426). Some escaping knights were said to have been captured by women. Among the captured were Sir John Gifford, Sir John Wylyntone and Sir Maurice Berkeley, all of who were ransomed for cash.

Sir John of Brittany was taken prisoner, probably on the battlefield. He may have been involved in the prisoner exchange that involved the queen, but it is more

likely that he was ransomed for cash. Over five hundred more, originally thought to be dead, were also captured and later ransomed.

On the Scots side, only two magnates were killed, Sir William Vipont and Sir Walter Ross, though there must have been a much larger toll of pikemen. Sir Edward Bruce, who was enamoured of Ross's sister Isabella, held Ross in high esteem. This had caused bad blood between Sir Edward and his wife's brother, the earl of Atholl (XIII, 474-494).

The bodies of Gloucester and Clifford were treated with respect and, at his own expense, the king returned them to Caernarfon for burial. He grieved particularly at the death of his kinsman, the earl of Gloucester, and had his body laid in a kirk and guarded after the battle (XIII, 512-519).

On the morning after the battle, King Robert received personally the surrender of Sir Marmaduke Tweng, who was returned to England free of ransom. Sir Philip Mowbray also surrendered the castle, as had been arranged, and came into the king's peace. He served the king loyally for the rest of his life (XIII, 520-550).

Dead English magnates were buried in holy ground; ordinary soldiers were buried together in a pit. After this had been done, Stirling castle was reduced to the ground, following the king's normal policy (XIII, 671-678).

After Bannockburn, all men accepted the king because he had acquired Scotland by force of arms. Some English chroniclers excused the defeat by blaming it on the pomp and overweening pride shown by their army before the battle. Caernarfon's army believed that victory was theirs by right, but God punished their pride by giving victory to the Scots. Bower also condemned the ostentation and pride of Caernarfon and his army, praising instead the king's trust in God. He also argued that Caernarfon's war was unjust, that he was attacking a foreign land and an innocent people, and that he received God's due punishment. Baston is particularly critical, emphasising the uselessness of fine apparel pride and wrongful invasion. Only Trokelowe dwells on the military reasons for defeat. The English were rash and undisciplined, tired and hungry. The Scots knew the ground, were well rested

and fed, and tactically superior. Barbour broadly agrees with Trokelowe, adducing the Scots victory to a plausible combination of reasons: superior preparation and training (XI, 69-77 and 211-504), the justice of the Scots cause (XI, 37-68; XII, 171-334), the determination and fighting prowess of King Robert's army (XIII, 112-224 and 265-281) and, finally, after all the reverses Scots had suffered over the years, perhaps the turn of the wheel of fortune had a hand in the victory (XIII, 635-670).

Summary

Let us consider first that part of the narrative that is printed in italic typeface, drawn from all sources except Barbour. It is a relatively expansive account of the battle of Bannockburn compared to other conflicts of the time: Stirling Bridge, Falkirk, Rosslyn, Methven, Loudoun Hill, the Chapter of Myton and Byland. It gives some information about the antecedents of the battle, the quality and relative strength of the forces involved, and broad tactical movement. It shows that the struggle took place over two days, and that morale was an important factor. Finally, it provides some discussion, though not agreement, on the causes of the Scots victory.

The italic narrative is also deficient in a number of respects, among which are:

- The tactical situation that forced Mowbray to make the truce is unclear.
- We are given no account of the reactions of the principals, King Robert and Caernarfon, to the truce.
- The narrative gives no clue about Caernarfon's attitude to the situation as he invaded Scotland.
- Nor does the narrative indicate how Caernarfon organised his army.
- We are given no account of how King Robert ordered his army and prepared for the coming battle.
- We are not told where the pits were dug, and so we have no tactical appreciation of this move.

- The narrative gives no idea of how King Robert motivated his troops for a battle in which they knew they would be greatly outnumbered by a much better equipped army.
- There is no account of the king's disposition of divisions for the battle.
- There is no explanation of why the Scots decided to fight on foot.
- We have no clear view why Moray's spearmen routed the English cavalry troop commanded by Clifford and Beaumont.
- The significance of King Robert's single-handed combat with Sir Henry de Bohun is unclear.
- The same is true of the repulse of the English vanguard at the entry to the New Park.
- There is no account of the Scots order of battle and tactics on the critical second day.
- There is no explanation why the English archers had so little effect on the battle.
- We have no clear view of why the English army broke up so disastrously.
- The narrative gives no account of Scots casualties.

Thus, the italic narrative set out above gives a reasonable account of what happened, but it is weak in evaluating why events turned out the way they did.

We turn now to the complete narrative, including material judiciously selected from *The Bruce*. This is a much more expansive account than that the previous one; four times more expansive, to be exact. Barbour, therefore, yields much new information, based on the use of material, the historicity of which has been verified by the analyses of Chapter 4-7. With reference to the inadequacies of the shorter narrative identified above, the expanded version deals with them as follows:

- Mowbray was forced into a truce due to lack of provisions needed to withstand a prolonged siege in Stirling castle.

- Barbour makes it clear that Caernarfon welcomed the truce, as it would force the Scots into a pitched battle. King Robert was initially wary, but determined to seize the opportunity that flowed from the truce.
- Caernarfon was confident, perhaps overconfident, about the results of the coming battle, as he granted Scots lands and titles while on the march to Stirling.
- Barbour gives a modicum of information about Caernarfon's military organisation: his bodyguard, who had his reins, and the number of divisions in his army (or his heavy cavalry?).
- The extended narrative outlines King Robert's muster, and gives some detail about the organisation and training of his forces.
- Barbour says clearly that the pits were dug beside the road that led to the entry to the New Park. As this was the most likely initial approach route of the English, the pits would funnel them on to a narrow front, exactly as the king had arranged at Loudoun Hill.
- The extended narrative gives some sense of how King Robert motivated his army for the apparently unequal struggle. It is not necessary to claim or believe that Barbour transmits the king's exact (or even approximate) words. It is reasonable, however, to argue that the sentiments advanced by the king would be remembered and repeated, perhaps even written down in some form. The battle of Bannockburn was, after all, the climactic moment in the struggle for independence.
- Barbour gives a clear explanation of why the king decided that his army would fight largely on foot. If the battle were to take place in the New Park, the English cavalry would be disadvantaged by the trees, which would be an obstacle to any kind of mounted tactical movement. If the battle were to take place on the causeway, the English cavalry would be hampered by the soft ground and surface water.

- According to the expanded narrative, Moray's spearmen routed Clifford's cavalry because of the tactical innovation of a mobile schiltrom in attack mode. Before Bannockburn, the schiltrom had been viewed essentially as a static defensive formation. In the static role, Moray's men performed well, but merely resisted the cavalry attacks. Barbour makes it clear that the critical moment came when the Scots advanced on the English cavalry, attacking horses and men. It was this action that broke up the English formation, and led to its rout and withdrawal.
- Barbour's account implies that King Robert's single-handed combat with Sir Henry de Bohun served as a model for the coming battle. The English knight was better armed, better armoured, and had the advantage of the aggressor. In defeating him, the king showed his army what could be done, and this also played a part in increasing Scots morale.
- The entry to the New Park was the obvious location to expect the first attack of the English vanguard, presumably the choice cavalry troop. No doubt that was why the king stationed his own division to defend the entry. Barbour's passage explains the importance of the conflict at the entry, as well as reporting on the action. As Moray's victory had demonstrated the efficacy of a mobile schiltrom to his own and James Douglas's divisions, so did the victory at the entry do likewise for the king's and Sir Edward Bruce's divisions.
- Not only does the partial narrative (excluding Barbour) give no indication of the Scots order of battle and tactics, it has no clear view of the English counterpart. There has been much discussion about whether the Scots fought in three or four divisions². Briefly, the argument for

² See, for example, Duncan, *The Bruce*, p. 445; McDiarmid, *Barbour's Bruce*, volume 1, p. 89; Våthjunker, pp. 52-5.

three divisions seems to rest on two premises. First, the English chroniclers give three as the number, and their view is to be preferred (because they are English? *Ipse dixit*). Second, three English chroniclers give three divisions, only Barbour gives four, and the majority must have it. However, the English chroniclers' general weakness over order of battle and tactics has been noted above. Three divisions is the standard formula for the period. In addition, the question of order of battle and tactics is an area where we should give preference to Scottish sources. In the excitement and heat of battle, what could English observers (who would report back to the chroniclers) actually see? The Scots order of battle and tactics would be well known on the Scottish side and, presumably, would be accurately reported. Finally, King Robert's dispositions for the action of the first day are incomprehensible with only three divisions. He had to take account of the strong possibility (one that any military tyro of the time could have foreseen) that the English would conduct an approximately simultaneous probe and attack on both north and south approaches to the New Park. Accordingly, he stationed the earl of Moray at St. Ninian's and his own division at the entry. Expecting concurrent attack, he would be obliged to have a force to support the St. Ninian's defenders and another to support his own division; hence the divisions of James Douglas and Sir Edward Bruce, respectively, are required by the Scots dispositions and tactics.

Just as the king set his own division to oppose the flower of the English cavalry in the entry, so he took on the critical task of manoeuvring the reserve (his own division) on the second day. Barbour makes it clear that the attack of the fourth division, held in reserve (and probably out of sight of the English) until the critical moment, was the turning point of the battle.

- Archers played a major role in the English victories at Falkirk (1298) and Halidon Hill (1333). Bannockburn falls almost exactly midway between these. Duncan³ notes that Caernarfon "...seems not to have favoured large archery contingents in his armies", but there is no evidence to support this statement. Let us assume, however, that it is true for Bannockburn, and that only five percent of the English army consisted of archers. Assume, further, that the Scots were outnumbered by two to one (almost all accounts of the battle assume three or more to one). Finally, assume that the king held back a quarter of his army in reserve (the reserve was not attacked by archers). Suppose, also, that the English archers were only able to shoot their immediate supply of arrows, and did not have ready access to reserve supplies carried in the baggage train. Even with this series of conservative assumptions, a properly marshalled force of archers would have been able to shoot four arrows for every attacking Scot. Had that happened, it would have devastated the Scots assault. Only Barbour gives an explanation. English preparations were disrupted by the surprise early morning attack of the Scots. When some organised English archery eventually emerged, the Scots schiltroms were immediately threatened, but the English archers were immediately attacked by the king's planned manoeuvre of Sir Robert Keith's light cavalry. Finally, the fleeing English archers disrupted and reversed the forward movement of their fellows who had not been involved earlier.
- Barbour's account makes it clear that the English army broke up because Caernarfon left the field early, and because they were pushed back relentlessly in a constricted space into the Bannockburn and the Forth.

³ Duncan, *The Bruce*, p. 482, note.

- Barbour gives almost no account of Scots casualties. He names only two knights, and makes no reference to losses among ordinary soldiers. Even accepting that casualties were almost always much lower among the winners of medieval battles, Barbour's account carries little credibility on this point.

It may be readily seen that, apart from the last point, the extended narrative provides a response (in some cases, a full response) to the deficiencies in the restrictive narrative noted earlier. In addition, inclusion of the Barbour material yields a number of other helpful insights:

- It suggests that, as well as contacting the castle garrison, the purpose of the Clifford/Beaumont sortie was to threaten the Scots from the north.
- It shows that the king was open to persuasion, even in the heat of battle, as he eventually allowed James Douglas to go to the aid of the earl of Moray on the first day.
- It adds the interesting detail that Clifford's cavalry fell back somewhat when they saw James Douglas's reinforcements approaching. This gave the earl of Moray the opportunity to switch from defence to attack.
- It gives vital information (to those who wish to identify the location of the second day's action) about the English movement across the Bannockburn at the end of the first day, and about overnight conditions in the carse.
- It notes the attack of the earl of Atholl on the Scots provisions depot at Cambuskenneth.
- It captures Caernarfon's surprise on the second day at the Scots readiness, not just to fight, but to attack.
- It adds an interesting footnote to how loyalties shifted in Scotland, describing how Sir Laurence Abernethy switched to the king's side when he encountered James Douglas in the Torwood immediately after the battle.

- It illustrates something of the king's personal characteristics in his behaviour over the death of the earl of Gloucester, and the surrenders of Sir Marmaduke Tweng and Sir Philip Mowbray.
- Finally, it underlines the king's policy on recaptured castles, noting that Stirling castle was reduced to the ground after its capitulation.

Thus, it may be reasonably argued that the extended narrative set out above, drawing selectively on material from *The Bruce* as determined by the analyses of Chapters 4-7, gives a fuller and much more meaningful account of the battle of Bannockburn. The italic narrative tells of events in the lead up to and during the battle. The extended narrative adds reasons why the battle was won, as well as a number of useful insights. By extension, it may be suggested that *The Bruce*, taken as a whole, has considerable utility for historians attempting to describe and interpret the 1306-29 period. The Barbour material must, of course, be used judiciously, based on the approach of Chapters 4-7 above, or on any other appropriate analytical methodology. Accordingly, it is clear that historians who have made prudent use of *The Bruce* (as noted, for example, in Chapter 1) have been acting in a reasonable and professional way, despite the previous absence of the analyses carried out in this dissertation.

Chapter 10

Barbour's Purpose

“The poem is undoubtedly an historical document of the highest value¹.”

In the light of the foregoing analysis and discussion, the objectives of this chapter are to re-assess the nature of John Barbour's work, evaluate a number of alternative explanations of his purpose, and identify his achievement. Three works, all originating in doctoral research, will be particularly helpful in this series of appraisals. The first² is David Coldwell's *Literary Background of Barbour's Bruce*, produced in 1947, which contains some useful material on Barbour's purpose and approach. While much of the content is literature-oriented, there is also some apposite historiographical analysis. The second³ is Lois Ebin's *John Barbour's Bruce: Poetry, History and Propaganda*. This is a wide-ranging review of the literary and historical nature of the poem. It was produced in 1969 and, while less analytical than Coldwell's dissertation, has more useful (for present purposes) insights and integrates them better. The third⁴ is James Goldstein's *The Matter of Scotland*, produced as a University of Virginia doctoral dissertation in 1987, and published as a book in 1993. This is an excellent and wide-ranging analysis of the ideological nature and purpose of Scottish historical writers, covering the period 1291-1478 (from Longshanks's initial involvement in the Great Cause to the production of Hary's *Wallace*). Three chapters of Goldstein's book are given over to an ideological consideration of Barbour's *Bruce*.

The nature of Barbour's poem was considered in some depth in Chapter 2, where it was variously held to be a romance, an epic, a verse chronicle written in the spirit

¹ Barron, *War of Independence*, p. 237.

² Coldwell, D.F.C., *The Literary Background of Barbour's Bruce*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1947.

³ Ebin, L.A., *John Barbour's Bruce: Poetry, History and Propaganda*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1969.

⁴ Goldstein, R.J., *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland*, University of Nebraska Press, 1993.

of a noble romance, and so on. Coldwell⁵ refers quite directly to the poem as an epic at one point, and as a romance two pages later (quoting, in justification, Barbour, Book 1, line 446). He claims⁶ that “Barbour was quite deliberately writing romance”, though conceding⁷ that Barbour’s historical content was derived from “chronicles now lost”. Ebin⁸ reviews the claims of romance and, finding them unconvincing, suggests that a reasonable synthesis is to see *The Bruce* as “an interpretation or artistic reconstruction of a particular period in history⁹”. Thus, the historical material is handled with “remarkable accuracy”, though the emphasis is “overtly literary, distinct in character and form from even the freest and most fanciful of contemporary chroniclers¹⁰”. Goldstein is emphatically critical of the romance notion. He suggests¹¹ that, in using the term “romanys”, Barbour “was probably closer to our understanding of medieval epic or heroic verse”. Further, Barbour’s characters do not inhabit the “enchanted landscape” of the typical romance, but a meticulously conveyanced Scotland where landowners’ rights had the highest priority¹². Perhaps it is reasonable to conclude, in line with MacKenzie¹³, that medieval writers would consider the romance method of treatment as compatible with strict historical accuracy and reality of subject. However, Barbour’s style is much more compact than, and lacks the flowery elaboration of, the typical romance. It is the story of a nation’s struggle to maintain freedom, and a biography of several leading figures in that struggle. That it is generally “suthfast” in detail has been set beyond question by the analysis of Chapters 3 and 4, though its chronology is occasionally weak.

Barbour’s work was not, of course, written in a vacuum. There were many other contemporary or near-contemporary writers of history. Chapter 2 mentioned John of

⁵ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, p. 6 and p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁸ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 18-23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹¹ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 136.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹³ MacKenzie, *The Bruce*, p. xv.

Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (later extended by Bower in the *Scotichronicon*), Sir Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica*, the anonymous monk of Malmesbury and his *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, the *Chronicle of Lanercost*, and the work of le Bel and Froissart. To these writers may be added Walter of Hemingburgh, the canon of Bridlington, Adam of Murimuth, Geoffrey le Baker and Henry Knighton. A number of these works carried dedications. This leads Ebin (logically) to conclude that, since *The Bruce* carried no such dedication, Barbour was not commissioned to write. In addition, none of the pensions or gifts to Barbour (see Chapter 1) carries any mention of his writing, though the £1 annual payment in perpetuity eventually came to be attributed to his writing of *The Bruce*. It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that Barbour wrote largely, perhaps wholly, at his own behest, and perhaps saw himself as part of a significant body of contributors to Scottish, English and Irish history.

Goldstein¹⁴ has reviewed and assessed the evidence of religious attachment or sentiment in *The Bruce*, and concludes that such content is more noticeable by its relative absence. While there is certainly an underlying Christian message, as would be expected even from an unenthusiastic cleric, it has a much lower profile than, say, in Bower's *Scotichronicon*. Barbour tries, when and where he remembers, to manoeuvre God on to the Scots side, but seems much more admiring of chivalry and its results. Bishop Wishart is mentioned only in passing, and Bishop Lamberton plays a minor role. These are surprising omissions; both bishops played important roles in the first War of Independence, and both were particularly supportive of the king's cause. Duncan¹⁵ suggests that Bishop Sinclair's somewhat higher profile is due to Barbour's own early connection with the diocese of Dunkeld. Barbour shows no concern whatsoever about the slaughter of clerics at the Chapter of Myton, about Douglas's butchery of the English on Palm Sunday, or even about the large number of deaths on the first day of Bannockburn (also a Sunday). Perhaps the clue lies in

¹⁴ Goldstein, *Matter*, pp. 204-214.

¹⁵ Duncan, A.A.M., personal communication, 7 February 2002.

the emergence of religiosity at the end of the poem, when the heroes are dying. At this point, there is no further need for chivalry. It has gained its end leaving, in Barbour's mind, a gap that is suitably filled by religious feeling and ceremony.

Despite the generally acknowledged historical relevance of Barbour's work, it is often qualified by insightful observations. Accepting that the "real" subject is the first War of Independence, Ebin¹⁶ notes that Barbour makes specific modifications of history. He manipulates the sequence of events for dramatic purpose. Bannockburn, for example, is used as the culmination of a series of increasingly successful Scots victories. The evidence Ebin offers for this view is circumstantial and weak, but she is on somewhat stronger ground in suggesting that effect is gained by means of omissions, changes in pace, emphasis and proportions, and rearrangement of sequence of events. This may well be true, but Ebin does not consider the less exacting alternative, that Barbour uses his sources (written and oral) to the best of his capability, but occasionally makes genuine mistakes, as Ebin does herself.

Ebin¹⁷ seems to recognise this point as part of a discussion on Barbour's methodology. She notes that Barbour skilfully reworks the events of the first War of Independence into a continuous literary narrative, bringing literary techniques to bear on historical content. She accepts that Barbour had access to written materials, perhaps even some or all of the sources used by Sir Thomas Gray in compiling his *Scalacronica*¹⁸. Barbour would also have access to official Scottish documents, at least in his capacity as an exchequer administrator. Goldstein¹⁹ accepts this general line that Barbour was writing as part of a well developed historical genre, but his approach is distinguished by his intention to offer aesthetic pleasure as well as historical understanding. Coldwell²⁰ also broadly agrees that Barbour used "second hand" oral tradition as well as written sources, embellished by his particular literary

¹⁶ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 67-70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-149.

¹⁹ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 135.

²⁰ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, p. 15.

approach. In a more idiosyncratic detail²¹, he suggests that William Bunnock's capture of Linlithgow peel was "deliberately reworked" from Froissart's account of the reduction of Edinburgh castle in 1341 by Sir William Douglas. He does not regard other possibilities, that Froissart reworked from Barbour or, more likely, that the besiegers of 1341 drew from Bunnock's experience or from a common military tradition.

Coldwell²² also describes *The Bruce* as a war poem, a *chanson de geste*, a genre that Barbour could not use without "a violent wrenching of historical fact". Again²³, idiosyncratically, he suggests that Barbour must concoct single-handed combats for his heroes (e.g. the king and de Bohun) rather than consider that such events would be a normal and expected element of medieval warfare. Much of the literary questing against Barbour's historicity appears to be based on a need to force him into whatever literary model appeals to a particular writer. Again and again, the simpler and more rational explanation is that Barbour was attempting to write as sound a history as his knowledge enabled, one that would be read aloud and remembered, therefore one that had to be written with appropriate literary skill and technique (Occam's Razor in action). This discussion seems to lead naturally to the question, what was Barbour's purpose in writing *The Bruce*?

Overall purpose

Coldwell²⁴ states explicitly that: "Barbour's purpose was to remind a recusant dynasty of its neglected heritage". By a repeated focus on the success of King Robert (Book 13, lines 718-722; Book 20, lines 614-617), he sets up an acceptable form of natural behaviour to be followed in his (Barbour's) time and in the future. Later, Coldwell suggests²⁵, less rationally, that Barbour intended to glorify the king as a latter day model of Alexander the Great, still labouring under the now-discredited

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

view that Barbour was the translator of *Buik of Alexander*. Ebin's starting point²⁶ is drawn from Barbour's own words in Book 1, where he states his purpose to tell a true story of great men in former times to preserve their deeds in our minds. We have already noted above that Ebin qualifies this view by suggesting that Barbour consciously modified history for his own ends. She also leads the argument²⁷, perhaps not without foundation, that the second War of Independence (1331-1371) was an obvious historical repetition of the first (1286-1332), and that *The Bruce* was "a mirror of the decades which followed it". It may be more fruitful to suggest that, if Barbour was intent on mirroring historical repetition, he may have been at least as concerned that events did not repeat themselves for a third time. Thus, the true significance of *The Bruce* is not just that it indirectly relates the lessons of King Robert's struggle and eventual triumph to the events of his son's long reign, but that it was a stark warning of what lay ahead if these lessons and principles were diluted or set aside. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that, insofar as he was able to envisage Scotland's longer-term future, Barbour was attempting to lay down guidelines "for all time coming".

Goldstein²⁸ takes a slightly different initial view, but develops it into an alternative and substantive perspective. Barbour, he says, "probably had no more in mind than his use of the vernacular to narrate a historical theme commemorating a few heroes". However, in this use of the vernacular may lie Barbour's major underlying purpose – to bring his story to as many ears and minds as possible. As Ebin²⁹ noted, Barbour had chosen "a subject inherently interesting to his countrymen". By using the vernacular, he multiplied his potential audience and maximised the likelihood of winning hearts and minds. Goldstein³⁰ expands his scenario by suggesting that Barbour was setting down a story that was already well known and well accepted; in writing the poem, he is (merely) filling a gap in

²⁶ Ebin, *Bruce*, p. 29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²⁸ Goldstein, *Matter*, pp. 134, 136.

²⁹ Ebin, *Bruce*, p. 151.

³⁰ Goldstein, *Matter*, pp. 137, 149.

recorded –as opposed to oral – history. He argues convincingly that, in setting down a vernacular account of the defence of Scotland’s freedom, Barbour was cementing a connection with the dominant political ideology of the time – the determination of the land-owning class to avoid domination by the English. Although Goldstein does not develop the argument beyond this point, it may be interpreted as an important enabling factor for Barrow’s concept of the “the Community of the Realm”.

Before attempting to synthesise a statement of Barbour’s overall purpose in writing *The Bruce*, it may be useful to evaluate other sub-purposes that have been suggested in literature and discussion. There are eight of these, and each will be considered separately below. They are: Barbour was a compulsive writer; he had literary pretensions; he was writing propaganda; his was a tale of moral edification; *The Bruce* is a manual for guerrilla warfare; it is a record of the deeds of great men; it is a record for the future (past times were better); it is a manual of kingship.

Barbour as a compulsive writer

The thought here is that Barbour, perhaps like Sir Walter Scott, was obliged to write because of some inner compulsion. Both, of course, may also have had external compulsions: debt for Scott, perhaps political ideology (as noted above) for Barbour. Scott’s inner compulsion, if it existed at all, may be seen in his wide range of writing and in his sometimes astonishing prolixity, especially in his prose works, which occasionally can be exhausting for the reader. From the internal evidence of *The Bruce*, we may immediately clear Barbour of accusations of prolixity. In most cases, the opposite is true. His descriptions of individuals and events are sometimes so brief as to exasperate. Where the descriptions are long, and even very long (Bannockburn, Weardale), they are nevertheless tightly written, full of useful and interesting detail, and almost always leave the reader wishing for more. So far as the range of writing is concerned, the perception of Barbour has changed substantially

over the course of the last century. In 1900, George Neilson³¹ argued strongly that Barbour was also the translator of the *Buik of Alexander, The Legends of the Saints*, and a contributor to a version of *Troy Book*. The latter two claims were not new, but the first was, and it was immediately and extensively criticised by Brown³². The controversy eventually died down, but without any firm conclusions having been reached. In 1947, David Coldwell³³ was evidently quite prepared to accept Barbour's involvement with *Buik* and *Troy*. Twenty-two years later, Lois Ebin³⁴ was evidently disinclined to argue against this line of thinking. By 1985, however, McDiarmid³⁵ had comprehensively dispatched these notions, a position comfortably accepted by Goldstein³⁶ in his recent book.

This leaves works that Barbour was supposed to have written, but which have not survived. Wyntoun and Bower ascribed three further works to Barbour: *The Brut*, *The Stewartis Oryginale*, and *The Stewartis Genealogy*. Duncan³⁷ believes that "the last two are certainly identical, and if a mythical Trojan origin were suggested for the Stewarts, *The Brut* could be another title for the same". He adds the interesting note that, if these works did exist in one or two titles, then Barbour's connection with the Stewart family may have been fairly close (as, perhaps, evidenced by some of the money gifts he had from Robert II, as noted in Chapter 2). Since, however, they have not survived; no useful comment may be made about Barbour's authorship. Thus, it is not reasonable to argue, either from internal or external evidence, that Barbour was under some inner compulsion to write.

³¹ Neilson, G., *John Barbour: Poet and Translator*, London, 1900.

³² Brown, J.T.T., *The Wallace and the Bruce Restudied*, Bonn, 1900, pp. 156-171.

³³ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, pp. 136-146.

³⁴ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 14-19.

³⁵ McDiarmid, M.P., *Barbour's 'othir werk'*, in "Barbour's Bruce: A fredome is a noble thing!" M.P. McDiarmid and J.A.C. Stevenson (eds.), Edinburgh, 1985, volume 1, pp. 17-37.

³⁶ Goldstein, *Matter*, pp. 148-149.

³⁷ Duncan, *Bruce*, p.3.

Barbour's literary pretensions

Writing was not common in Barbour's time, though it came to the fore in the next generation. In addition, he grew up in an age when vernaculars were becoming more popular and more frequently used³⁸. Scots was one of the many vernaculars whose users were becoming conscious of its latent vigour and what it could achieve. It is highly likely that Barbour was part of this growth of consciousness, and his poem was certainly (with Wyntoun's Chronicle) one of the main engines for further growth. Some points of discussion earlier in this chapter suggest that Barbour was sufficient of a scholar to wish to make a literary as well as a historical contribution. As a poet, he may not be in the first rank, but some of his passages (e.g. the battles of Brander and Bannockburn) certainly move along with a pleasing rhythm and exciting pace. It may be claimed on Barbour's behalf that, when he does get carried away and excited on occasions such as these, he rises to a level of excellence in poetry. Indeed, recalling that Barbour (and others) would promulgate his work by reciting at official and celebratory gatherings, Brander and Bannockburn may well have been among his "party pieces".

Barbour clearly put a substantial premium on loyalty and bravery. He often turns aside from his main story line to compliment those who show these virtues, for example the king (III, 153-168), Sir James Douglas (XV, 551-574), the earl of Moray (X, 780-792), and Sir Giles d'Argentin (XIII, 320-327). Similarly, Barbour greatly dislikes disloyalty, for example the perfidy of Mandeville (XV, 111-123), and shows general disapproval of cowards (VI, 338-341; IX, 91-94).

Barbour makes a number of legendary allusions in the early part of his poem perhaps, as Goldstein claims³⁹, to establish a precise literary context for the poem's ideology. This may well be the case for the passage about the Maccabees (I, 445-476), the long passage on treason (I, 511-568), and the Theban analogy (II, 531-550). However, in other cases, it is at least as likely that Barbour uses such allusions to

³⁸ Barrow, G.W.S., personal communication, 4 February 2002.

³⁹ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 146.

confirm or drive home some point from his narrative. Into this category may fall the reference to Celtic and classical legends before the battle of Dail Righ (III, 61-92), the recovery of Rome from Hannibal (III, 187-266), and the example of Caesar (III, 267-298). Even more so, the story of Tydeus of Thebes (VI, 181-286) seems to be added to justify to doubting readers, the king's defence of the ford by himself against the men of Galloway.

Goldstein⁴⁰ states categorically that *The Bruce* is differentiated from most other broadly contemporary historical texts by Barbour's "literary artistry" and his intention to offer a "degree of aesthetic pleasure". He does not expand on this statement, but he may be referring to (among other things) Barbour's intensive use of alliteration, a technique that had recently been revived in English works⁴¹. Again, this may well be because of Barbour's foreknowledge that his work would be performed live; for this, alliteration is an excellent aid to delivery and maintaining the attention of an audience. Coldwell sets out 723 examples of alliteration in *The Bruce*. Over half of these (406) are concentrated in the section of the poem that covers the period from the return to Carrick to the battle of Bannockburn. The link between "action" poetry and alliteration was clear in Barbour's mind.

However, bearing in mind the results of Chapter 5, suggesting that Barbour may have edited the work of up to five sub-authors, it is interesting to look at the division of instances of alliteration over the clusters of Books, set out below.

<u>Cluster</u>	<u>Books</u>	<u>Alliterations</u>	<u>Lines</u>	<u>Alliterations per 100 lines</u>
1	1	36	630	5.71
2	14	32	554	5.78
3	12, 13, 15I, 17, 18I, 19	184	3603	5.11
4	2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16I, 20	240	5347	4.49
5	5, 6, 7, 8, 15S	210	2803	7.49
6	16S, 18S	21	708	2.97

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴¹ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, pp. 203-204.

While the average figures in the last column do not entirely differentiate the clusters, it is immediately obvious that both clusters 5 and 6 are quite different to all others in relative frequency of alliteration. Cluster 4 is quite different to all but Cluster 3. Clusters 1, 2 and 3 are broadly similar in frequency of alliteration. These figures serve as partial confirmation of systematic variations between the clusters of Books derived in Chapter 5, underlining the possibility of more than one hand at work in the compilation of *The Bruce*.

Barbour as a propagandist

Debate on this notion is longstanding. Barrow⁴² probably gave the best summing up of earlier views in observing that, despite historical reliability, for Barbour the king was the hero of a work of art. Chivalrous qualities were emphasised, particularly in the cases of the king and Sir James Douglas. Barrow goes on to say that, perhaps, Barbour's more serious fault was to over-emphasise the chivalrous qualities of an age in which the very individuals who were supposed to uphold knightly ideals practiced barbarities themselves. Ebin⁴³ noted that "Barbour fashioned a work flattering both to the new king (Robert II) and to the powerful Douglas family". She also suggests⁴⁴, reasonably, that the payments made to Barbour in 1376-78 were "rewards for a work pleasing to the king, rather than payments for a poem ordered". This, perhaps, puts Ebin's previous comment into some perspective. King Robert II and the Douglasses may well have found *The Bruce* flattering, but that is quite different to posing the unproveable claim that Barbour wrote in order to flatter them. Ebin⁴⁵ makes a further point that is worthy of consideration. She notes that earlier chroniclers (Fordun, Wyntoun) were either neutral or somewhat pro-Bruce. Later chroniclers (Bower, Pluscarden) are significantly pro-Stewart. Barbour's contribution, she says, was at the point of flux between the two sets of

⁴² Barrow, *Bruce*, pp. 312-313.

⁴³ Ebin, *Bruce*, p. 152-153.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-205.

pressures. Goldstein⁴⁶ appears to sympathise with this view, arguing that too much attention has been paid to Barbour's conscious beliefs and intentions, and their political ramifications. He warns against reading *The Bruce* as propaganda, as this fails to account for the ideological significance of the idea of freedom, the poem's central theme.

The theme of propaganda was developed by Boardman⁴⁷, who suggests that Barbour produced a "politically correct" account that was helpful to Robert II in the struggle to consolidate power after his accession. He believes that Barbour also "certainly" wrote *The Stewartis Oryginale*, and this claim has been justified by other scholarship (see first section of this chapter). Boardman also notes carefully that Robert II must have found Barbour's account "gratifying", without implying that this was the poet's explicit intention. Indeed, he goes on to say that Barbour's evident intention was to influence the behaviour of his own contemporaries, an eminently acceptable interpretation of "propaganda".

In a later contribution⁴⁸, Boardman focuses on the Fordun-Wyntoun-Bower continuum, and develops a case for propaganda that fits well with Ebin's notion, explained above, though expanding on it considerably. He points out how clearly Fordun portrayed Robert III in an essentially unsympathetic way, whereas both Wyntoun and Bower, more specifically the anonymous chronicler whose work can be distinguished in the works of both men, depicted him in a much more positive way. Boardman believes that this chronicler drew on eye witness accounts and family traditions. Reminiscent of Barbour, he often uses the phrase "as men sayis". The anonymous chronicler differs from Fordun on a number of occasions that are relevant either to the future Robert or his family, e.g. the lists of the dead for Halidon Hill (1333) are adjusted by the chronicler to show Stewart support for David II. Similar differential treatment of Robert Stewart is demonstrated for the battle of

⁴⁶ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 152.

⁴⁷ Boardman, S., *The Early Stewart Kings*, East Linton, 1996, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁸ Boardman, S., "Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland: Robert the Steward and the 'Anonymous Chronicle'", *Scottish Historical Review*, 76, 1997, pp. 23-43.

Neville's Cross (1346), for his responsibility or otherwise for the breakdown of law and order during David II's imprisonment in England, and for the baronial rebellion (1363) that included Robert Stewart, and that was put down by David II. In these and other instances, Boardman points out clear differences between Fordun and the anonymous chronicler, and he argues that these represent indications of propaganda in the chronicles. These arguments are convincing when there are two different reports to compare, perhaps less so when the difference amounts to one chronicler describing an incident where the other does not write about it. Unfortunately, clarifying motives for not writing about an incident may involve little more than speculation.

Thus, Boardman makes clear the likelihood of overt propaganda in Fordun/Wyntoun/Bower and gives some clear examples. He also suggests the possibility of veiled propaganda that involves comparison of a record described by one chronicler, but disregarded by another. This gives rise to two thoughts. First, Boardman seems to be saying that evidence of propaganda should make us wary of those parts of conflicting chronicles where it shows, but this has little or no influence on how we evaluate the remainder of the chronicles in question⁴⁹. Second, it is clear that Coldwell, Ebin and Goldstein find no overt propaganda elements within *The Bruce*. The same appears to be true of Boardman, but *The Bruce* was not a major focus of his study. Supporting this lack of overt propaganda in *The Bruce*, it should be noted that Barbour fails to take any of a number of opportunities to give even passing mention to the deeds and achievements of either David II or Robert II.

The Ebin/Goldstein/Boardman line of argument is persuasive. It seems to project Barbour as a writer whose work either had propaganda content for others, was used by others for propaganda purposes, or both. In any age, writing that touches on politics and national history will be seen as a form of propaganda, at least implicitly.

⁴⁹ For a view of how aggressive external propaganda may be integrated within chronicles, see Boardman, S., "Late medieval Scotland and the matter of Britain", in E.J. Cowan and R.J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, Edinburgh, 2002, pp. 47-72.

No writer today, and even less in the fourteenth century, could write a wholly dispassionate, impartial and factual account of stirring events. Apart from anything else, this would require readers and observers to be wholly dispassionate, impartial and factual in the same way as the writer.

None of the above can be taken to suggest that there are no propaganda elements in Barbour. There is probably nothing overt, but there are aspects that could be taken as veiled propaganda. This type of propaganda will be considered in the final chapter, after a statement of Barbour's purpose has been derived. Barbour writes from an unashamedly Scottish standpoint, and gets this across quite firmly to the reader. His audience, primarily Scottish lords and lairds, would rejoice in Barbour's account of the first War of Independence, they would be delighted to hear of the involvement of their fathers and grandfathers in the struggle, and they would identify absolutely with Barbour's ideology of freedom and independence of the Scottish realm. Most writers, including Barbour's critics, would settle for less.

The Bruce as a tale of moral edification

As noted above, Coldwell⁵⁰ explicitly states a view that Barbour was quite deliberately setting an example for national behaviour that he hoped would be followed. Ebin⁵¹ is much more expansive on this topic, suggesting that Barbour values the practical and moral utility of tales like his own. Specifically:

“Within the framework of the history, he integrates form, narrative technique, and the delineation of character to point up the exemplary value of the action.”

According to this line of thinking⁵², Barbour draws attention to the exemplary aspects of his account by dividing it up into structural individual episodes. Particularly when drawing classical and other allusions, he is moralising and emphasising for readers the exemplary significance of events. For example, when the

⁵⁰ Coldwell, *Literary Background*, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 30-31.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

king defends the ford against the 200 men of Galloway, he makes it clear that King Robert triumphs because of his effort, valour and virtue. Many of the set speeches in the poem also have an exemplary function, especially where they are aimed at clarifying the meaning of some major action.

The best examples of this may well be the king's speeches at Bannockburn, but it also happens at Methven, Dail Righ (after the battle) and Loudoun Hill. Thus Barbour presents the king as an ideal example of chivalry; he is loyal to his cause and his supporters; he is just and compassionate when required, prudent and decisive when needed. By repetition throughout the poem, by portraying Sir James Douglas and others similarly, and by producing examples of contrary behaviour (O'Dempsey, Longshanks, Sir Edward Bruce on occasion), Barbour drives home to his readers the moral and political lessons he has set out to clarify.

Goldstein⁵³ has an interesting perspective on this question of example. Rather than focus on Barbour's explicit approach, he focuses more on what King Robert's example leads to. He points out that the king's authority springs from, and is maintained by, two factors: his success as a military leader, and his setting of superior example. For the first, we may instance the continuous stream of military victories from Loudoun Hill onwards; for the second, good examples are the single-handed combat with Sir Henry de Bohun on the first day of Bannockburn and the king being first into the Perth moat, scaling ladder in hand. Perhaps the culmination of this aspect of the poem is the deep sense of loss Barbour engenders on the death of the king, followed quickly by Sir James Douglas and the earl of Moray. We are left with a strong sense that Scotland "lay desolat eftyr hys day".

This aspect of moral *exemplum* has little to do with Barbour's status as a churchman. As already noted, the Christian message in the poem is expressed implicitly and indirectly. While his characters and their actions take place against a rather distant backcloth of Christianity, the real ideal may be recognised today as the

⁵³ Goldstein, *Matter*, pp. 185-186.

partly pagan one of chivalry – the proper behaviour of a knight. Note, however, that fourteenth century society would have encompassed chivalry wholly within its understanding of the Christian ethos. Barrow⁵⁴ has observed that the word “courteous” is one of Barbour’s favourites. He tells, for example, of the king’s behaviour with respect to Gloucester’s body after Bannockburn, the treatment of the pregnant laundrywoman in Ireland, and the consideration of Sir Ingram Umfraville following the execution of Sir David Brechin. These are in sympathy with Christian precepts, of course, but Barbour is really highlighting the knightly ethos.

***The Bruce* as a “guerrilla” manual**

There was, of course, no term in the fourteenth century for what we would now call guerrilla warfare. However, it was manifestly clear to King Robert, as it had been to Sir William Wallace and the Comyns before him, that pitched battles against a vastly superior enemy were to be avoided at all costs. The hit-and-run raids on English forces in Scotland, typified by much of Sir Edward Bruce’s activity, and the booty raids into England were the obvious alternative. There was, no doubt, a current term for this kind of fighting, but it has not come down to us. For ease of discussion, the anachronistic expression “guerrilla” warfare is used here.

This perspective on Barbour’s poem seems to have been first suggested by Moray McLaren⁵⁵. There is much in the early parts of *The Bruce* to suggest that the notion is plausible. It must have seemed the only possible strategy after Methven though, as Barbour himself admits, the king had lost the trust of the common people (2, 499-502). Thus, initially at least, one of the necessities for successful “guerrilla” fighting was missing, the support of the common people in providing information, shelter and supplies. Also, it is at least possible that there was a substantial measure of coercion of the common people, as much by King Robert as by his adversaries. However, this negative influence may soon have been counterbalanced by stories of

⁵⁴ Barrow, G.W.S., personal communication, 4 February 2002.

⁵⁵ McLaren, M., *If Freedom Fail*, London, 1964, p.61.

the king's personal heroism, beginning at Dail Righ. Stories like these would spread quickly. The action at Dail Righ also showed the king's attention to another aspect of successful "guerrilla" fighting, the personal morale and support of the few followers he was left with. By personally covering the retreat of his followers, he must have driven home his sense of loyalty and determination. In chiding the earl of Lennox during the escape to Kintyre, the king underlined the importance of small "guerrilla" forces keeping in contact to avoid dissipating strength and effect, another powerful and pertinent lesson. Perhaps the most obvious statement of the "guerrilla" attitude came in the aftermath of Methven. Speaking of the king's attitude, Barbour says (2, 475-6):

That he trowit in nane sekyrly
Outane thaim off his company.

Indeed, this same attitude is repeated shortly afterwards when the king arrives at Dunaverty (3, 673-4):

He traistyt in nane sekyrly
Till that he knew him utraly.

Finally, the early exploits of James Douglas after the return to Carrick are explicitly "guerrilla" in nature. His three attacks on his own castle showed the use of "slycht" and the demonstrations of horror that could befall the alien occupier. The Douglas Larder must have served as a deep and long-lasting blow to the morale of the English forces in southern Scotland. After the battle of Loudoun Hill, the action tends to become somewhat more formal "guerrilla" warfare than basic guerrilla fighting, though the use of "slycht" was maintained until the Weardale campaign forced a permanent peace.

Thus, there is no doubt that the king saw the value of "guerrilla" fighting and took to it with a vengeance. James Douglas and Thomas Randolph were, if anything, even more adept. It was, perhaps, the only way to oppose with limited resources a much more powerful military nation. However, it is difficult to develop this

argument into a case for Barbour writing a “guerrilla” manual. He certainly recorded the incidents set out above, but wherever possible he introduces and emphasises chivalric qualities. In the final analysis, it seems that Barbour believed that trial by pitched battle was still the honourable thing.

The Bruce as a record of the deeds of great men

Goldstein⁵⁶ notes that Barbour gains authority by quoting the “auld storys” as told by the still-living survivors of the first War of Independence. Perhaps the author is merely following the example of his principal hero. In relating the story of Ferambas to his followers during the crossing of Loch Lomond, the king is acknowledging the value of recognising the worthy exploits of knightly heroes. Barbour repeats this methodology with the classical and other allusions used, as noted above. Occasionally he does this at arms length, as when he has the lord of Lorn compare the king to the hero Gaudifer (3, 79). Despite these and other examples, it is difficult to make a case that one of Barbour’s main aims was merely to record the deeds of great men.

The Bruce as a record for the future (past times were better)

At the outset, Barbour declares that he wishes to write a true story that will be remembered forever (1, 13-16). He might well have been surprised to know just how successful he would be in this aim. Throughout the poem, he uses historical material and literary capabilities to the full, and ensures that the story of his heroes and their accomplishment will be edifying for future generations. Barrow⁵⁷ suggests that there is a feeling among some past historians that things were much better in days before theirs, and that Barbour reflects this attitude. Barbour’s heroes were clearly in the past; he misses obvious opportunities to praise both David II and Robert II.

⁵⁶ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 143.

⁵⁷ Barrow, G. W. S., personal communication, 4 February 2002.

It cannot be denied that Barbour did set down a broadly reliable account of part of the first War of Independence. Despite his opening statement, however, it is difficult to argue that this was his main purpose, or even important among a number of objectives. Other aims explored in this chapter seem to subsume the notion of creating a record for the future, reflecting the better times in the past.

The Bruce as a manual of kingship

Ebin⁵⁸ makes a strong case for *The Bruce* being a part of the *speculum principis* (kings' mirror) tradition, one part of which concerned the office and duty of a king. The writings of St. Thomas Aquinas must have been known to Barbour, who perhaps drew some lessons or paradigms from *On the Training of Princes*⁵⁹ (c. 1265-66). Works in the *speculum* tradition were generally written for a specific ruler, contained some theory of kingship, as well as instruction about personal values and behaviour. Often, the writer's own ideology was supported by appropriate short stories and examples. The ideal leader, the subject of the work, was often contrasted against less worthy characters. It is clear that Barbour organises his material in a similar way: the lengthy historical narrative about King Robert and the first War of Independence – of great interest in its own right – but buttressed at many points by lessons and examples aimed at changing, improving or supporting the reader's attitudes in some way.

Thus, the king is portrayed as a model ruler⁶⁰, whose behaviour determines the prosperity of the kingdom, and whose character and strength are critical to its continued independent existence. He has a suitable balance of virtues: brave yet wise; aggressive yet judicious; active yet reflective; firm yet compassionate. He is intensely loyal to his colleagues, to the wider circle of his supporters, and (eventually) to his nation. The earl of Moray and Sir James Douglas are represented

⁵⁸ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, Thomas, *Opera Omnia*, Parma, 1852-71, XVI, pp. 224-90.

⁶⁰ Ebin, *Bruce*, pp. 60-66.

in a broadly similar way except that Barbour, though his admiration for Douglas is profound, clearly does not see him as a suitable ruler type. The implication is that Moray would make much the better guardian in the event of the king's death, and that, of course, is exactly the outcome of Barbour's tale. Perhaps Barbour even tries to let us understand that this is also the king's covert view. Both Moray and Douglas, however, show the elevated sense of loyalty possessed by the king, which Barbour values so highly. Set against these three champions are Longshanks, Caernarfon (to a lesser extent), O'Dempsey, Mandeville, and certain aspects of Sir Ingram Umfraville and Sir Edward Bruce.

Goldstein⁶¹, as usual, is much more specific:

“In producing an image of the value and function of good kingship in Scotland, *The Bruce* offers the most sustained piece of “monarchical” ideology produced in medieval Scotland.”

He suggests⁶² that one of the most obvious questions that Barbour wishes to explore is that successful kingship must be built on some kind of popular (or, at least, broad) support. Thus, from the low point after Dail Righ, when the king is temporarily deserted by the commons, he gradually gathers passive as well as active support after the return to Carrick. By the time of Loudoun Hill, he is sustained by over 600 “rangale” as well as by his trained fighting men. Other commoners do great service for the king, as has already been noted: Philip the forester at Forfar, William Bunnock at Linlithgow, and William Francis at Edinburgh. Eventually, at Bannockburn, he was supported by nearly 20,000 “rangale” who (according to Barbour) played a significant part in the battle. The numbers at Bannockburn may be inflated, but Barbour's message is clear.

Tightly bound up in Barbour's mind with the notion of good kingship is the idea, or ideology as Goldstein would have it, of freedom. This paradigm - linking the nation of Scots with the cause of freedom maintained by good kingship - runs

⁶¹ Goldstein, *Matter*, p. 153.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 188-190.

through Barbour as deeply as it does through the Declaration of Arbroath⁶³. Ebin also accepts the bond between good kingship and freedom, and makes the interesting point⁶⁴ that it is Barbour's historical content (rather than his literary artistry) that argues for the importance of freedom for the Scots in the war against England.

It may, then, be appropriate to see *The Bruce* as a manual of kingship aimed at its own time. Barbour describes a role that all medieval rulers had to aspire to and play as skilfully as their personal characteristics allowed. He illustrates clearly the need for magnanimity and justice, a combination that was at the heart of the philosophy of medieval kingship. King Robert emerges as a ruler who is clearly aware of this, of the need to keep his countrymen bound together by bonds of loyalty, and who understood that it was his responsibility to demonstrate such higher goals by continuous personal example.

Perhaps Bower followed this example in addressing himself to James II (1437-60) in *Scotichronicon*. Mapstone⁶⁵ notes that James II was a minor while Bower was writing his chronicle. According to Bower, she says, the previous hundred years had demonstrated the need for strong kingship; this would be the prescription again following the assassination of James I (1406-1437). Despite Bower's reservations about the latter's summary execution of members of the Albany family in 1425:

“...his principle aim in extending his chronicle beyond 1424 was to set forth the reign of James I as an example of strong and (until the end) successful kingship, a *speculum* for his successors.”⁶⁶

Mapstone discusses at length how Bower's work was meant, in part, as a guide for the young James II. He use examples from antiquity, as well as from Scotland's more recent history: the chaos caused by lack of a king, the misrule brought about by a weak king; and the way a king can develop from unsatisfactory to competent by application and experience. Barbour focuses on only a small subset of what Bower

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶⁴ Ebin, *Bruce*, p. 208.

⁶⁵ Mapstone, Sally, “Bower on kingship”, Chapter 22 in Bower's *Scotichronicon*, 9 volumes, D.E.R. Watt, Aberdeen, 1987-1998, pp. 321-228.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, quotation from p. 322.

thinks is necessary in a successful king. If we take *The Bruce* as Barbour's view of kingship, then success rests almost entirely on martial values and military achievements. Perhaps his time line can explain Barbour's narrow perspective. His chronicle covers a period of twenty-four of the most dangerous years that Scotland had faced to date. A slowly developing, weak or absent king would have spelled the death knell of the kingdom. Martial aptitude was, perhaps, all that counted. Bower's chronicle covers a much longer period, and a vast range of different kingship conditions. His view of kingship was perhaps more valid than Barbour's in terms of comprehensiveness. While Barbour's may have been much more appropriate for 1306-29, we must conclude that, if his purpose was to develop a *speculum principis*, he fell short of the mark that Ebin identifies.

Summary

In assessing the nature of John Barbour's work, a strong case cannot be made for *The Bruce* as a romance, as the term is understood today. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has this definition:

A fictitious narrative in prose of which the scene and incidents are very remote from those of ordinary life.

The OED alternative definition is, perhaps, closer to Barbour's composition:

A tale in verse, embodying the life and adventures of some hero of chivalry, and belonging in matter and form to the ages of knighthood.

It is clear from the analyses of Chapters 4-7 that *The Bruce* contains a large measure of accurate historical information, and this has to be at the centre of an assessment of the poem. Accordingly, it may be appropriate to describe *The Bruce* as a historically based narrative of chivalry using literary techniques for aural effect and ideological persuasion.

So far as purpose is concerned, it may be claimed with some confidence that the poem was not produced because Barbour was a compulsive writer, to record the deeds of great men, or to make a record for the future demonstrating that past times were better. Nor is *The Bruce* a prototype “guerrilla” manual, though Bower’s description tells us that this form of fighting was well appreciated⁶⁷:

Let the retaliation of Scotland depend on her foot-soldiers, her
mountains, her mosses, her countryside;
Let woods, bow and spear serve as secure walls.
Let her warbands threaten among the narrow places, and let her plains
Be so kindled with fires that they are abandoned by the enemy.
Let her sentinels be watchful, crying out by night.
Thus thrown into disorder, the enemy will retire, put to flight by the
sword of hunger;
It is a certainty, so King Robert assures us.

The poem’s moral content is tied almost exclusively to chivalry, but either it is a very personal view or it is wholly specific to 1306-29. Penman’s⁶⁸ extensive discussion of chivalry at David II’s court reveals a surprisingly different situation from his father’s time. David II promoted men from below, sometimes well below, the nobility whereas Robert I depended on such as Walter Stewart, James Douglas, Thomas Randolph, Robert Keith and Gilbert Hay. He wished to extend Edinburgh castle in the style of Richard the Lionheart’s Chateau Gaillard (where David spent some time), whereas his father regularly demolished castles (including Edinburgh). He gave his patronage to many Scottish knights who went on crusade, especially those who developed good crusading reputations; his father was interested only in those Scottish knights who were prepared to fight against England until independence was secured. On a more practical level, David II used chivalric lordship to counteract the influence of his regional magnates who had aggrandised themselves during his minority. Like his father, he also favoured those who

⁶⁷ *Scotichronicon*, XII,10.

⁶⁸ Penman, M.A., *The Kingship of David II, 1329-71*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Andrews, 1998, pp. 117-60.

supported him but, in the case of knights like Sir Alexander Ramsay and Sir William Douglas, the chivalric content of the relationship was substantial.

Penman⁶⁹ makes the significant observation that in using chivalric values to remove knights from the sway of the regional magnates and plant them in areas of Scotland where his influence was reduced he was, in fact, following exactly the same path as his father, just with a different line of attack. Though Penman himself does not draw this conclusion, it is tempting to construe from his discussion that he used chivalry largely as a means to an end. In this, he may have been closer to his father, and to Barbour's perspective of the value of chivalry, that a first look would suggest.

Indeed, chivalry seems to have been Barbour's main personal interest. Perhaps, in a 'Walter Mitty' way, he imagined himself as the "parfit, gentil knyght" rather than the boring cleric. It is interesting how closely his word picture of Sir Giles d'Argentin resembles Chaucer's knight:

A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan,
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe, and honour, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that Barbour had permissions to travel to or through England from 1357 onward, on the first occasion specifically to go to Oxford, subsequently (at least once) to go on pilgrimage. Is it possible that Barbour was the model for Chaucer's Oxford scholar who, according to Wilson⁷⁰, may have been Scottish?

Barbour's literary skills were those of a storyteller rather than of a rhymer. His use of allusion, confined to the early sections of *The Bruce*, is always used to support

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷⁰ Wilson, S.C., "Scottish Canterbury Pilgrims", *Scottish Historical Review*, 24, 1927, pp. 258-64.

or elucidate some important point of the narrative, never for mere literary embellishment. Who can say for certain why he used alliteration? Perhaps because it was coming back into vogue in the second half of the fourteenth century; but much more likely, it was to appeal to the ear, consciousness and memory of his anticipated audience.

In all likelihood, others used *The Bruce* as a direct source of propaganda at the time of writing, long afterwards, and even down to the present day⁷¹. It is much less likely that Barbour consciously set himself to write a work of propaganda. The historical content is too high to support such a suggestion. In addition, he includes too many inconvenient defeats, deaths and other negative circumstances.

The notion of *The Bruce* as a manual of kingship is well supported, though the advice may well have been aimed directly at King Robert II in the first instance. King Robert I emerges from Barbour's work as a very specific kind of king fulfilling a very specific role, characterised by magnanimity and justice. The poet intended this model of kingship to instruct his audience on appropriate individual values and behaviour, personified in a king who supplies the moral and chivalric leadership that ensures Scotland's unity, independence and continuity.

Accordingly, the poet's purpose may be stated as follows. John Barbour set out to produce a historically accurate account of the part played by King Robert and his lieutenants in the War of Independence in a way that showed Robert as a model king for his, though perhaps not for Barbour's, times. The central theme of the poem is chivalry and the core ideology is freedom of the Scots from English interference and domination. It is therefore a nationalistic poem, and it vindicates the claim of the Bruce/Stewart dynasty. The poem was intended to be broadcast by recital, so a verse form was chosen using alliteration and other literary devices to make the content accessible, persuasive and memorable.

⁷¹ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 13.

With respect to Barbour's achievement, Chapter 9 on the battle of Bannockburn illustrated the historical element graphically. Without *The Bruce*, our understanding of the events of 1306-1329 and their inter-relationships would be much diminished. The literary achievement was to carry out the task using vernacular and verse in a way that had not been attempted before. For this accomplishment, John Barbour is rightly regarded as the father of Scottish literature.

Chapter 11

Conclusions

“Barbour’s *Brus*, impressive both as poetry and history, is a glorification of Robert I, Sir James Douglas and other early-fourteenth century heroes, focused on the theme of freedom and independence¹.”

All kinds of terms have been assigned to categorise *The Bruce*. While “epic poem” seems to represent the broad consensus, it is a less robust concept than Duncan’s three overlapping genres of book, history and tale². It is unlikely that, in using the word “romance”, Barbour came anywhere close to the present day meaning. It is more probable that he used the poem as a vehicle to project his political message about the freedom of Scotland from alien oppression.

Hailes virtually introduced Barbour as an important source in his *Annals* (1776), after which *The Bruce* supplied much material for medieval historiography until Barrow’s first edition of *Robert Bruce* in 1965. Thereafter, explicit use of Barbour declined somewhat, though it is difficult to write about the 1306-1329 period without some allusion to the poem. There have been no critical reviews of Barrow’s conclusion that our view of Robert I will always depend on the extent to which we accept Barbour’s authority³.

This dissertation set out to evaluate *The Bruce* systematically for historical reliability. First, the content was checked against other broadly reliable sources where these covered episodes in the poem. Second, it has attempted to interpret Barbour-specific material in terms of potential historical authenticity. Third, it has explored the likelihood or otherwise that John Barbour was the sole author of *The Bruce*. Fourth, it has investigated accounts of the battle of Bannockburn to establish how much *The Bruce* adds to an understanding of this event. Fifth, it has attempted to establish Barbour’s range of purposes in setting out to write *The Bruce*. The extent

¹ Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, p. 56.

² Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 8.

³ Barrow, *Bruce*, p. 312.

to which each of these five research objectives was realised will be evaluated below in turn.

Historicity

In Chapter 3 it was established that 119 discrete episodes could be identified in *The Bruce* that, between them, made up 95 percent of the text. In Chapters 4-7, an evaluation was carried out of the 91 of these episodes that appear in other historical sources. The following rating scale was used for evaluation:

Weakly supported	rating of 3
Supported	rating of 4
Confirmed	rating of 5
Strongly confirmed	rating of 6

[Plausibility ratings (0, 1, 2) were applied to the 28 episodes that are specific to Barbour (i.e. uncorroborated episodes); these are accounted for in the following section.] Evaluation against other sources determined that the number of episodes in each category was as follows:

Weakly supported	rating of 3	13 episodes
Supported	rating of 4	23 episodes
Confirmed	rating of 5	26 episodes
Strongly confirmed	rating of 6	29 episodes

The average rating for these 91 episodes is 4.78. [Note, again, that this cannot be regarded as a normal average, such as is used in multivariate analysis; it is used here as a shorthand for the kind of sentence that now follows.] In other words, and on average, where the episodes in *The Bruce* can be checked against other sources in a systematic way, they are evaluated much closer to the “confirmed” category than to “supported”. No previous systematic analyses of this nature have been published, so direct comparison is not possible. However, 4.78 on a scale of 3 to 6 represents a much higher level of historicity than many critics of *The Bruce* have suggested,

particularly in light of the fact that the 91 episodes involved cover over two-thirds of the text of the poem.

The poem appears to be particularly valuable as a reliable source from the Buchan campaign onward. Suggestions that *The Bruce* is primarily literature, or essentially story-telling are wide of the mark. The analysis in this dissertation has shown the poem to be a valuable and valid historical source. In addition, the analytical methodology set out in Chapter 3 is demonstrably effective. Like all other sources, including documents, *The Bruce* must be used carefully and synthesised with corroborative material where possible. Finally, it should be noted that few, if any, of the alternative narrative sources for this period have been subjected to anything like the level of rigorous analysis presented here.

Barbour-specific material

The 28 episodes that are recorded only in *The Bruce* make up about a quarter of the whole text. They were analysed in Chapters 4-7 using a systematic approach analogous to that described in the previous section, and linked to that approach (in that it gives an overall scale from 0 = not plausible to 6 = strongly conformed). Uncorroborated episodes in *The Bruce* may, as is the case with all other sources, provide unique information, exclusive data, or distinctive insights. Its unsupported episodes should not be given more credence than similar episodes in other sources, but nor should they be given less. Indeed, it may be argued that uncorroborated episodes from any source should not be used at all unless the source has been subjected to the kind of systematic analysis carried out in this dissertation. Accordingly, an appraisal of the “plausibility” of uncorroborated episodes was made. This conception was assessed on the basis of how an episode fits with the general context of the poem and the wider environment of the times, together with indirect and circumstantial evidence. The “plausibility” analysis cannot be as rigorous as that applied to corroborated episodes, but is helpful in evaluating unsupported incidents.

The rating scale used for this evaluation and the number of episodes in each category are shown below.

Not plausible	rating of 0	4 episodes
Plausible	rating of 1	17 episodes
Highly plausible	rating of 2	7 episodes

The average rating is 1.1, suggesting that the uncorroborated episodes in *The Bruce* may, overall, be “plausible”. Again, there are no previous analyses of this nature for comparison, but the evaluation indicates that the many historians who use this uncorroborated material from *The Bruce* are at least as rational in doing so as they are in using alternative uncorroborated sources. As shown in Chapter 1, rejecting uncorroborated material from the poem without the kind of thorough analysis presented here not only impoverishes historiography of the period, it also represents a fundamentalist attitude to sources that is unworthy of the enquiring intellect. *The Bruce* carries a rich vein of material which, even if not corroborated in the usual prudent manner, has a place in the collection of sources the historiographer of the period may use to present a full narrative of the first War of Independence.

Overall level of historicity

The summary analyses in the previous two sections may be put together to establish an integrated view of the level of historicity of *The Bruce*. The number of episodes in each category is, then, as follows:

Not plausible	rating of 0	4 episodes
Plausible	rating of 1	17 episodes
Highly plausible	rating of 2	7 episodes
Weakly supported	rating of 3	13 episodes
Supported	rating of 4	23 episodes
Confirmed	rating of 5	26 episodes
Strongly confirmed	rating of 6	29 episodes

The average rating is 3.9, suggesting that the overall level of reliability of *The Bruce* is very close to “supported”. Referring back to Chapter 3, this level is equivalent to a source whose content “is corroborated by a documentary source or two chronicle sources”. While there may well be medieval chronicle sources that deliver a higher level of historicity than this, it is patently clear that historians in some situations would welcome a source of this reliability (for example, Byzantium for the 1306-29 period).

Who wrote *The Bruce*?

The twenty-book structure of *The Bruce*, established by Pinkerton in 1790 (see Chapter 2), was used to distinguish stylistic characteristics that may indicate different authorial hands at work. Some simple comparisons suggested that differential characteristics are present, and these were supported by t-tests of specific differences in word usage. However, the most definite evidence of multi-authorship came from cluster analysis.

The cluster analysis of Chapter 8 used the 17 most commonly used words in the poem, which accounted for more than one third of the text. These words are prepositions, personal pronouns and conjunctions; they are not context-specific in any way. Two very different clustering algorithms were used, to provide a check and comparison. Both clustering techniques used gave the same result:

Cluster	1	Book 1
Cluster	2	Book 14
Cluster	3	Books 12, 13, 15 (Ireland), 17, 18 (Ireland), 19
Cluster	4	Books 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 16 (Ireland), 20
Cluster	5	Books 5, 6, 7, 8, 15 (Scotland)
Cluster	6	Books 16 (Scotland), 18 (Scotland).

The statistically robust nature of the cluster solution suggests that there was more than one contributor to *The Bruce*, and possibly as many as six, with Barbour perhaps filling the roles of contributor and editor. Other, more speculative,

interpretations of the cluster solution may be possible, but could involve assumptions difficult to justify.

It was noted in Chapter 8 that a reasonable conjecture may be that John Barbour himself wrote the Books in cluster 4 (2,3,4,9,10,11,16(I) and 20). These carry the king's actions as a strong part of the developing theme of the poem, together with the final Book, which Barbour would probably claim for himself. It could also be argued that Barbour wrote cluster 6 (Books 16(S) and 18(S)). These books deal with the exploits of Sir James Douglas. The word analysis indicates that they are more similar to cluster 4 than to any other material in the poem. Cluster 2 (Book 14), the opening of the Irish campaign and cluster 3 (perhaps written by an author with military understanding), were probably not written by Barbour. It is just possible, however, that the same author wrote these two clusters. Cluster 1 (introductory material) and cluster 5 (perhaps written with a knowledge of the campaign in the south of Scotland) were definitely not written by Barbour, and almost certainly were the work of two distinct authors.

Thus, although there could be as many as six hands at work in *The Bruce*, it is most unlikely that there were less than four. If we give John Barbour the credit for clusters 4 and 6, then he was responsible for about 45 percent of the total content of the poem. The remainder he may have edited for historical authority and perhaps political significance, but not in the strictly literary sense. The results discussed above make the single authorship hypothesis much more difficult to support than previously.

Although the twenty-book structure may not be the most appropriate analytical archetype for cluster analysis, the results summarised above have strong explanatory power in a number of situations. Three are now set out briefly, to give an appreciation of the range of problems that may be dealt with from this perspective. First, the king's trip to the Isles via the Tarbert portage (episode 15.3 in Chapter 7) falls at a juncture between two separate authors - Book 15 (I) and Book 15(S). This may well be an episode added by Barbour as a link between the contributions of

these two authors. Second, the low levels of historical content of Books 5, 6, 7 and 8 was noted at the end of Chapter 7. In terms of corroborated content, Book 9 is on a par with the whole of Books 5-8 (i.e. there is as much corroborated content in Book 9 as in Books 5-8 put together). Bear in mind that Books 5-8 have one author, Book 9 was written by another, and it may be argued that there is a strong link in this case between authorship and level of historicity. Third, the poem's account of the Irish campaign has been criticised for poor chronology, for example by Duncan⁴. The Irish campaign was written by up to three different authors. This, together with weak editorship (by today's standards) may well account for the poor chronology.

Bannockburn

An account of the battle of Bannockburn that does not include material from *The Bruce* was set out in italics in Chapter 9. It gave a relatively expansive narrative of the battle, certainly more so than is available for many other conflicts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The narrative gives a reasonable account of what happened, but it is poor in assessing why events turned out the way they did. However, it was also established that this account raised sixteen significant questions for which there were no answers. Chapter 9 also set out an account of the battle that included material from *The Bruce*. It was much more expansive and gave a satisfactory response to fifteen of the sixteen shortcomings identified in the first account, as well as yielding nine additional valuable insights. This comparison indicates directly that *The Bruce* is an indispensable source for the battle of Bannockburn. Accounts that neglect the poem as a source will miss many important events and insights. Indirectly, the comparison carried out may also suggest that the poem is a useful source for the whole period 1306-29. The comparison also makes clear why historiographers draw so heavily on *The Bruce*, especially those who –

⁴ Duncan, *Bruce*, p. 520.

over the last ninety years – have participated in the on-going controversy about the location of the battle of Bannockburn.

Purpose

To a large extent, purpose (like ideology) is in the eye of the beholder, as is suggested by the many views identified and evaluated in Chapters 1, 2 and 10. Any consideration of Barbour's purpose must surely begin with the recognition that the poem carries a large amount of accurate historical information. Even an approximate assessment of the amount of time and effort needed to bring together and synthesise this historical data argues against a purpose that was primarily literary. It is also difficult to justify explicit propaganda, either for Robert I or Robert II, as a principal objective of the work. *The Bruce* has been much more used as propaganda by its readers down the centuries, and this was probably especially so in the fifty years or so after it was written. Indeed, it is not unlikely that Barbour himself saw the implicit propaganda potential of his work after he had started to distribute the finished epic.

This primary focus on historicity does not mean that the poem is without literary merit. There is much evidence of strong story-telling ability, and the rhyming strikes few harsh notes throughout. The use of classical allusion is evocative of the themes of events, and never used as mere literary ornamentation. The use of alliteration is expressive, especially for a work that was meant to be declaimed aloud.

However, the overall purpose established by this research is as follows. John Barbour set out to produce a historically accurate account of the part played by King Robert and his lieutenants in the War of Independence in a way that showed Robert as a model king for his and (perhaps) Barbour's times. The central theme of the poem is chivalry and the core ideology is freedom of the Scots from English interference and domination. It is therefore a nationalistic poem, and it vindicates the claim of the Bruce/Stewart dynasty. Barbour intended that his poem be broadcast by recital, so a verse form was chosen using alliteration and other literary devices to make the content accessible, persuasive and memorable.

Barbour's literary achievement in using the vernacular for the first (surviving) time is very substantial. It is, however, much outweighed by the crucial historiographic contribution. Without *The Bruce*, our comprehension of the first War of Independence would be significantly reduced, and our appreciation of the moral and military roles of King Robert I would be minimal.

Implications

The previous five sections have considered the five research objectives individually. They must now be looked at together so that their interactions may be identified and an overall conclusion drawn. Where *The Bruce* can be compared to other sources, it clearly emerges as a reliable authority for the period it covers. Even for those episodes that cannot be corroborated, it would appear to give good insights and perhaps accurate information in some cases. As always, where historians quote sole sources, they must do so cautiously and after some rational process of analysis. The process used here is both rational and rigorous. Accordingly, the cautiously offered results for uncorroborated events add weight to the view that *The Bruce* is a reliable source for its period.

This is strongly borne out by the analysis of the battle of Bannockburn. Other sources give a better overview than is available for many other battles of the period. However, such an account would be regarded as a poor report on what was the absolutely crucial event of the reign of Robert I, an event that also had very significant meaning for his successors. Adding Barbour's material to the description of the battle fills many gaps of understanding, meaning, strategy, tactics, causes and outcomes. By extension, it is reasonable to argue that non-Bannockburn material from *The Bruce*, corroborated and otherwise, is equally valuable in understanding other events in the period.

The proposition that *The Bruce* is the work of more than one hand does not in any way invalidate this view of historical reliability. If anything, it strengthens the view that the poem contains much historically valuable material. Such division of

labour may have had several advantages, including the ability to specialise geographically, by activity (battles, skirmishes, background, overview etc.), by available source material, and by personages. Indeed, many previous commentators have suggested these different perspectives without proposing different sub-authors. Many of these comments were covered in Chapters 1 and 2. Much recent historiography has been published as edited books, allowing specialisation by contributors, and this is believed to underwrite reliability. Similarly, the notion of multi-authorship of *The Bruce* should underpin and substantiate the historicity findings.

It cannot be claimed that the poem's historicity is also validated by Barbour's purpose. However, that purpose is congruent with and supportive of the claims to historical reliability. Barbour wanted to produce a "suthfast" account. It was not in his own interest to do otherwise. He wished to advance King Robert as a model for future Scottish sovereigns, who would protect Scottish freedoms just as powerfully and chivalrously. Some commentators have scoffed at Barbour's claims to truth, suggesting that other medieval authors had claimed the same and had either wittingly or unwittingly failed to live up to the assertion. That is, of course, no argument to persuade that Barbour was equally hypocritical. There is no known source predating Barbour that makes this claim, and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that he was disingenuous in doing so. The plain conclusion here is that he succeeded in his aim.

It could be reasonably argued that the preceding discussion of the implications of this research depends on taking a positive (as opposed to negative or median) view of the five research outcomes, thus making the overall conclusions more affirmative than may be justified. An alternative line of synthesis has been suggested to the present writer as a further option within which the findings may be considered. It is set out briefly below as a counterpoint to the more upbeat discussion above.

The systematic analysis carried out in Chapters 4-7 show that much of the content of *The Bruce* is corroborated to a greater or lesser extent by other sources.

The various degrees of corroboration are shown at the end of Chapter 7. What does this mean in terms of comparing Barbour with other medieval chroniclers? The logical answer must be “nothing”. It has been pointed out time and again that the type of systematic analysis carried out on *The Bruce* has not as yet been replicated for any of the medieval chronicles (English, Scots and French) that have been referred to in Chapters 4-7. Thus, no comparison is possible, unless it is suggested that like be compared with unlike.

Precisely the same argument may be led in the case of documentary evidence, which is normally taken to be trustworthy unless it is internally inconsistent or shows inconsistency with other documents. Whether this assumption is justified probably depends on the perspective of the individual historian. However, no matter the extent to which this view transgresses the regular professional norms of judgement, unless a systematic analysis of documentary evidence is carried out, it cannot be demonstrated absolutely to be more or less reliable than other sources. In practice, documentary sources are normally regarded as the most reliable available (but not absolutely reliable), and that synthesis with other sources is necessary to arrive at new and reliable historical knowledge.

In this sense, *The Bruce* is accepted to be generally less reliable than documentary evidence where both sources address the same matter. So far as other chronicle evidence is concerned, *The Bruce* may be regarded as no more or no less reliable than other, except where special circumstances have been pointed out in Chapters 4-7, or unless special circumstances like the propaganda battle between Fordun and the Wyntoun/Bower anonymous chronicler are relevant.

The analysis of propaganda in Fordun-Wyntoun/Bower⁵ showed clearly that both sides omitted material when it suited, and also seemed to be prepared to amend material through shrewd choice of alternative wording. This type of analysis may be carried to rational conclusions essentially because it is comparative. It would be

⁵ Boardman, *Chronicle Propaganda*.

significantly more risky to attempt to come to such conclusions about a single chronicle. However, comments about what is missing in *The Bruce* are possible, and many have been made in the course of Chapters 4-7. There are others. Why, for example, is the report of the Great Cause so truncated? Why is there no mention, direct or indirect, to Sir William Wallace, his achievements, or even his death? Why is there such a gap between the Buchan campaign and the fall of Perth? Why is the extensive series of raids into northern England represented by so few illustrations?

These are interesting questions, and are open to two broad types of interpretation. First, no matter how meticulous a historian may be, the practicalities of publishing in any age mean that the author is forced to be selective about the material included. Second, some material is included and some excluded in order to give a particular slant to the work, or to conform to some ideological, political or emotional objective of the author (this would also include the rewording of sources). Both interpretations may apply to Barbour, but which and in what circumstances must be decided by the purpose or hypothesis of each individual historian. However, while such omission or rewriting, which occurs in all sources including documents, may affect the overall view of the historicity of a source, it necessarily has little bearing on the historicity of an individual episode.

Thus, as has been pointed out several times in Chapters 8-10, substantial care must be taken when using Barbour as a source. The same applies equally to all other chronicles used in Chapters 4-7. Each chronicle is helpful and reliable in some aspects, less so in others. Some of these points were made in Chapter 3 about other chronicles, and there has been much apposite comment about Barbour throughout. Like other chronicles, Barbour has some general claim to historical reliability except when he is clearly spinning a yarn. These occasions have been clearly labelled "not plausible" in Chapters 4-7. Otherwise, Barbour may have no more claim to historical reliability than other chroniclers but we may perhaps be more confident about ascribing comparative historicity of varying degrees to episodes in *The Bruce* until

similar systematic analyses have been carried out on Fordun, Wyntoun, Bower, Gray, Guisborough, Knighton, Froissart, Bridlington and the rest.

Thus, two discussions of the implications of this research are laid out above. One is more affirmative, the other more cautious. A choice may be made between them, but that is probably a facile and unhelpful approach. A more helpful perspective is to regard the second as the reasonable lower limit we can ascribe to Barbour's historical reliability, the first is the judicious upper limit. A logical professional historian will use episodes from Barbour in wider historical syntheses, moving between these limits as circumstances mandate, always confident that a rational justification may be expounded.

Contribution of this research

Historians have used *The Bruce* as a source for nearly five hundred years. This research indicates that it is appropriate and professional to do so, providing the normal rigorous appraisals are used that apply to any other source. This is certainly so for the two-thirds of *The Bruce* where at least partial corroboration from other sources is available. However, the research also suggests that uncorroborated material in *The Bruce* may be used judiciously, provided the kind of systematic evaluation used in Chapters 4-7 is carried out, as would be the case with any other uncorroborated source.

The proposition that *The Bruce* may be an edited work of several contributors is open to a much wider range of interpretations than may be explored here in detail. On the literature side, there is obviously vast potential to explore differences in style and their meanings, using the database of 87,696 words and the vocabulary of 6,284 words that make up the poem. It may be, for example, that further and more insightful analysis could be carried out using Jamieson's 14 Book structure⁶, Innes's⁷

⁶ Jamieson, *Bruce*.

⁷ Innes, *Bruce*.

150 cantos, or Duncan's 259 topic-related subdivisions⁸. Another insightful possibility may be to examine the structure in terms of adjective use or verb forms.

In terms of historical content, the concept of multi-authorship may, after due evaluation, be helpful in explaining gaps in *The Bruce*. Perhaps one or more contributors failed to deliver their agreed portions of work, a problem of which modern book editors are only too aware. Alternatively, gaps (e.g. the four years that separate the end of the Buchan campaign from the siege of Perth) may be due to shortage or unavailability of suitable informants and sources. Perhaps Barbour edited out such sections, as they were not seen to contribute to his overall purpose as defined above, or as he himself would have defined it.

Clusters may help to identify where common source material has been used (for example, Cluster 6 may be derived from the supposed "lost" Douglas chronicle). The existence of different writers may explain some of the readily identifiable chronology errors (for example, the poor chronology of the Irish campaign may be accounted for by the involvement of at least two, and perhaps three different writers for the Irish material). Finally, examining interactions between clusters and certain types of material may yield further insights. For example, it is noticeable that the bulk of incidents involving women occur in the "Barbour" Books. The same is true for classical allusions.

Above all, it is suggested that the contribution of this research is to emphasise the relevance of systematic as opposed to discursive analysis. It is not suggested that the particular techniques used here are perfect or the best (they are criticised below), but a carefully defined systematic technique will, if rigorously applied, develop constructive insights that may not be accessible to other approaches. Thus, systematic and discursive analyses should properly and professionally be seen as complementary.

⁸ Duncan, *Bruce*.

Potential problems of the research methodology

It should be possible, in future research, to improve both the ranking technique used in Chapter 3 and its application. It focuses on episodes, perhaps at the expense of chronology and overview. It could be redefined – perhaps a seven-point scale aggregates judgement too much. It may also be that the episodes themselves are defined at the wrong level of aggregation, though a robust attempt was made in Chapter 3 to justify the method and level of aggregation. For example, the Weardale campaign is treated in Chapter 7 as one episode, and it covers 592 lines of the poem (an average of 148 lines per episode). The second day of Bannockburn (See Chapter 5) accounts for 897 lines, but is divided into 13 episodes (an average of 69 lines per episode). This approach was deemed suitable for the present purposes, as the average for the whole poem is 113 lines per episode, virtually equidistant from the two examples just quoted. However, for other purposes, either or both these episodes may be deemed as being on the extremes of aggregation/disaggregation.

The evaluative technique used in Chapters 4-7, rating uncorroborated episodes on a scale of “plausibility”, may well be pushing at the limits of what is regarded as academically respectable. It may even have broken through those limits. Its use here, however, is again to introduce the concept of systematic analysis. If the systematic approach used here is weak and/or inadmissible, the response should be to develop better systematic approaches, not to fall back lamely on discursive methods that avoid the issue and give only an incomplete interpretation.

The most obvious limitation of the cluster analysis is that it depends on the “Book” structure that was imposed by Pinkerton in 1869. Perhaps recourse could be made to an earlier structure, though there is no evidence that it would be nearer the original than Pinkerton’s. The number of words used for the analysis could be increased, so long as the additional words were not context-bound in any way. Another approach might be to use such extra words for post-test analyses (analysis of variance) to test the cluster structure more rigorously.

Compleo

Professor Duncan introduces his edition of *The Bruce* by emphasising that his readers should enjoy the poem, not the translation. For the hurried reader, the harried student, or the habitual sampler this is probably a redundant injunction. For those who approach *The Bruce* in almost complete ignorance, but who have the time, need or inclination to take it more gradually, Professor Duncan's invitation becomes a passport or a travel permit. The journey is well worthwhile for those who persevere.

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Appendix 1
Use of Incidents from The Bruce in Nineteenth Century Histories

		Tyler	Wright	Burton	Pictorial	Thomson	Lang
1	Aspects of early life of James Douglas	•	•		•	•	•
2	The Bruce/Comyn deal					•	
3	Longshanks' reaction, Bruce escapes to Lochmaben					•	
4	Battle of Methven	•	•	•		•	
5	Douglas aids the ladies in the Mounth	•	•	•	•		
6	Battle of Dail Righ	•	•	•	•	•	
7	The King on Loch Lomondside and Lennox	•	•		•	•	•
8	Kintyre-Dunaverty-Rathlin	•				•	•
9	Capture and death of Christopher Seton				•	•	
10	Arran expedition and move to Carrick	•	•	•	•	•	•
11	The Douglas Larder	•	•	•	•	•	•
12	Second attack on the King by three men				•	•	
13	The King is pursued by bloodhounds, defends the ford	•	•	•	•	•	•
14	Douglas attacks Douglas castle, kills Thirlwall	•			•	•	
15	The King, the bloodhound, his foster brother, three men	•	•	•	•	•	
16	Battle of Glentrool	•				•	•
17	Skirmish at Edirford	•			•	•	
18	Battle of Loudoun Hill	•	•	•	•	•	•
19	The King goes over the Mounth	•	•		•	•	
20	Leaving Douglas in the south	•			•		
21	Herschip of Buchan	•	•	•	•	•	•
22	Taking of Forfar castle	•	•		•	•	•
23	Battle of the river Cree	•	•		•	•	
24	Edward Bruce's 50 against John de St John's 1500	•	•		•	•	•
25	Edward Bruce takes 13 castles in a year	•					
26	Douglas attacks Douglas castle, kills Sir John Webeton	•			•	•	
27	Taking and holding of Thomas Randolph	•			•	•	

**Appendix 1 (contd.)
Use of Incidents from The Bruce in Nineteenth Century Histories**

		Tyler	Wright	Burton	Pictorial	Thomson	Lang
28	Battle of Ben Cruachan	•	•		•	•	•
29	Taking of Perth	•	•		•	•	•
30	Taking of Linlithgow peel	•	•		•	•	•
31	Taking of Roxburgh castle	•			•	•	
32	Taking of Edinburgh castle	•			•	•	•
33	Edward Bruce's deal with Philip Mowbray	•		•	•	•	
34	Caernarfon's preparations and numbers for Bannockburn	•	•	•	•	•	•
35	The King's preparations for Bannockburn	•		•	•	•	•
35	Battle of Bannockburn	•	•	•	•	•	•
37	Aftermath of Bannockburn	•			•	•	•
38	Scots casualties		•				
39	Douglas pursues Caernarfon to Dunbar, skiff to Berwick	•	•		•	•	
40	The Irish campaign	•	•	•	•	•	•
41	The King goes to the Isles via Tarbet	•	•			•	
42	Douglas kills Richmond, de Caillou, Neville	•	•		•	•	
43	Reference to "Black Douglas"	•			•		
44	Bishop Sinclair's skirmish in Fife				•	•	
45	Taking of Berwick, Walter Stewart becomes constable	•	•	•	•	•	•
46	Siege and defence of Berwick	•	•	•	•	•	•
47	Chapter of Myton	•	•	•	•	•	
48	English invasion of 1322, Warenne's comment			•	•	•	
49	Douglas attacks the English invaders at Melrose	•	•				
50	Battle of Byland	•	•	•	•	•	•
51	Elements of the Weardale campaign	•	•	•	•		
52	The King's will and death				•		
53	The story of Douglas' hands and face					•	
54	King's heart buried at Melrose, Douglas at Douglas church		•		•	•	

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5.3	First attack on Douglas castle	217-428
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Appendix 2 (contd.)
List of Episodes to be Evaluated

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Appendix 2 (contd.)
List of Episodes to be Evaluated

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15.1	Siege and fall of Carrickfergus	90-265
15.2	The King visits the Isles	266-318
15.3	Douglas encounters Sir Edmund de Caillou	319-424
15.4	Douglas encounters Sir Ralph Neville	425-574
16.1	The King goes to Ireland	1- 48
16.2	Third battle against Sir Richard Clare	49-242
16.3	The Scots move around Ireland without opposition	243-304
16.4	Irish kings do homage to "king" Edward Bruce	305-334
16.5	Douglas encounters Richmond at Lintalee	335-492
16.6	Bishop Sinclair repels the Fife invasion	543-682
16.7	The King returns from Ireland	683-702
17.1	Siege and fall of Berwick town	1-170
17.2	Berwick castle is taken and is given a new constable	171-260
17.3	Caernarfon besieges Berwick	261-490
17.4	The Chapter of Myton	491-588
17.5	The defence of Berwick	589-790
17.6	The siege of Berwick is lifted	791-885
17.7	Moray and Douglas return to Scotland	886-908
17.8	Sir Walter Stewart is commended by the King	909-946
18.1	Sir Edward Bruce is defeated and killed	1-174
18.2	Remaining Scots return to Scotland	175-224
18.3	Caernarfon invades Scotland again	225-290
18.4	Douglas ambushes the English at Melrose	291-332
18.5	The battle of Byland	333-522
18.6	The Scots ravage as far as the Wolds	523-568
19.1	The Soules conspiracy	1-140
19.2	13-year truce agreed	141-204
19.3	Death of Sir Walter Stewart	205-228
19.4	Start of the Weardale campaign	229-408
19.5	Douglas foils an English ambush	409-484
19.6	Stanhope Park	485-616: 688-720
19.7	End of the Weardale campaign	721-820
20.1	Peace with the English	1-152
20.2	King Robert's testament	153-248
20.3	Death of King Robert	249-308
20.4	Sir James Douglas fights and dies in Spain	309-600
20.5	Death of the earl of Moray	601-630

Appendix 3 Evaluation of Episodes

Episode	Evaluation	Rating	Episode	Evaluation	Rating
1.1	Supported	4	7.1	Plausible	1
1.2	Supported	4	7.2	Plausible	1
1.3	Weakly supported	3	7.3	Plausible	1
1.4	Supported	4	7.4	Supported	4
1.5	Supported	4		Total	7
		Total		Average	1.8
		Average			
		3.8			
			8.1	Plausible	1
2.1	Supported	4	8.2	Strongly confirmed	6
2.2	Confirmed	5	8.3	Strongly confirmed	6
2.3	Strongly confirmed	6	8.4	Plausible	1
2.4	Confirmed	5		Total	14
2.5	Weakly supported	3		Average	3.5
		Total			
		23			
		Average			
		4.6	9.1	Strongly confirmed	6
			9.2	Strongly confirmed	6
3.1	Weakly supported	3	9.3	Confirmed	5
3.2	Plausible	1	9.4	Plausible	1
3.3	Weakly supported	3	9.5	Strongly confirmed	6
3.4	Plausible	1	9.6	Confirmed	5
3.5	Weakly supported	3	9.7	Weakly supported	3
		Total	9.8	Plausible	1
		11	9.9	Highly plausible	2
		Average			
		2.2			
				Total	35
				Average	3.9
4.1	Strongly confirmed	6			
4.2	Confirmed	5			
4.3	Confirmed	5	10.1	Supported	4
4.4	Highly plausible	2	10.2	Weakly supported	3
4.5	Plausible	1	10.3	Highly plausible	2
4.6	Supported	4	10.4	Strongly confirmed	6
		Total	10.5	Strongly confirmed	6
		23	10.6	Highly plausible	2
		Average	10.7	Confirmed	5
		3.8			
				Total	28
5.1	Supported	4		Average	4.0
5.2	Supported	4			
5.3	Highly plausible	2			
5.4	Not plausible	0	11.1	Confirmed	5
5.5	Plausible	1	11.2	Plausible	1
		Total	11.3	Supported	4
		11	11.4	Confirmed	5
		Average	11.5	Strongly confirmed	6
		2.2		Total	21
				Average	4.2
6.1	Plausible	1			
6.2	Weakly supported	3			
6.3	Plausible	1			
		Total			
		5			
		Average			
		1.7			

**Appendix 3 (contd.)
Evaluation of Episodes**

Episode	Evaluation	Rating	Episode	Evaluation	Rating
12.1	Strongly confirmed	6	17.1	Confirmed	5
12.2	Supported	4	17.2	Supported	4
12.3	Supported	4	17.3	Confirmed	5
12.4	Supported	4	17.4	Strongly confirmed	6
12.5	Confirmed	5	17.5	Highly plausible	2
	Total	23	17.6	Strongly confirmed	6
	Average	4.6	17.7	Confirmed	5
			17.8	Plausible	1
13.1	Weakly supported	3		Total	34
13.2	Strongly confirmed	6		Average	4.3
13.3	Not plausible	0			
13.4	Strongly confirmed	6	18.1	Confirmed	5
13.5	Confirmed	5	18.2	Plausible	1
13.6	Confirmed	5	18.3	Strongly confirmed	6
13.7	Strongly confirmed	6	18.4	Supported	4
13.8	Not plausible	0	18.5	Strongly confirmed	6
13.9	Weakly supported	3	18.6	Supported	4
13.1	Supported	4		Total	26
13.11	Strongly confirmed	6		Average	4.3
13.12	Strongly confirmed	6			
13.13	Strongly confirmed	6	19.1	Confirmed	5
	Total	56	19.2	Strongly confirmed	6
	Average	4.3	19.3	Weakly support	3
			19.4	Strongly confirmed	6
14.1	Strongly confirmed	6	19.5	Highly plausible	2
14.2	Weakly supported	3	19.6	Strongly confirmed	6
14.3	Supported	4	19.7	Supported	4
14.4	Confirmed	5		Total	32
14.5	Not plausible	0		Average	4.6
14.6	Confirmed	5			
	Total	23	20.1	Strongly confirmed	6
	Average	3.8	20.2	Confirmed	5
			20.3	Strongly confirmed	6
15.1	Confirmed	5	20.4	Supported	4
15.2	Plausible	1	20.5	Confirmed	5
15.3	Strongly confirmed	6		Total	26
15.4	Confirmed	5		Average	5.2
	Total	17			
	Average	4.3			
				Overall Total	466
				Overall Average	3.92
				Standard Deviation	1.84
16.1	Confirmed	5			
16.2	Weakly support	3			
16.3	Confirmed	5			
16.4	Supported	4			
16.5	Strongly confirmed	6			
16.6	Supported	4			
16.7	Confirmed	5			
	Total	32			
	Average	4.6			

Appendix 4
Comparison of Books 1-13 and 14-20

t at 95% confidence level is 1.73
(significant values highlighted)

Book	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Mean	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Mean	t-value
and	49.4	57.6	54.2	49.5	54.1	50.8	49.5	51.2	53.4	60.5	55.1	52.7	55.6	53.35	48.3	46.8	48.6	53.1	57.3	49.2	53.9	51.02	1.50
the	29.8	44.5	45.4	39.8	50.3	47.4	45.7	48.3	46.5	53.5	40.8	38.7	39.5	43.85	44.1	42.3	43.0	49.6	42.5	36.0	40.3	42.55	0.50
that	41.9	36.1	39.0	40.4	39.0	39.0	36.7	45.0	35.9	36.4	36.5	41.9	45.1	39.44	38.2	36.7	39.0	43.0	39.0	38.6	38.5	39.00	0.33
thai	12.3	24.2	23.0	22.0	14.9	17.4	27.1	21.4	26.9	21.5	22.7	28.2	28.2	22.29	45.0	23.5	25.6	32.6	28.9	32.4	19.9	29.70	-2.54
he	33.6	28.2	28.7	18.5	32.6	39.7	34.9	33.4	22.6	23.8	21.9	9.7	19.1	26.67	14.6	24.1	25.2	16.7	26.5	18.5	25.9	21.63	1.46
to	23.8	19.7	19.9	18.9	19.4	15.6	13.7	18.2	17.5	20.4	20.8	19.0	15.4	18.64	16.9	18.2	19.6	20.2	19.1	17.9	21.1	19.00	-0.33
thar	8.8	16.1	13.5	13.5	8.7	12.2	16.3	19.4	19.4	12.4	17.7	20.3	21.4	15.36	30.3	19.5	19.6	22.5	22.1	23.9	17.9	22.27	-3.53
his	15.5	18.9	17.4	12.7	23.4	17.9	18.6	19.7	25.7	16.2	16.0	8.2	13.2	17.18	8.7	16.9	16.7	10.6	12.5	12.2	18.4	13.72	1.74
in	18.0	15.0	12.7	16.8	19.6	13.8	15.5	13.7	14.3	16.5	13.4	14.2	16.5	15.39	16.6	15.0	19.2	14.7	15.5	14.3	13.1	15.49	-0.11
thair	6.0	10.8	14.8	11.9	9.0	13.6	11.8	16.4	14.3	10.6	17.4	15.0	16.9	12.95	19.9	12.8	18.5	14.7	15.3	15.5	6.8	14.79	-1.07
off	18.8	18.4	15.8	16.4	17.2	15.6	7.1	13.1	19.6	13.6	15.5	9.5	10.5	14.70	13.2	5.4	6.5	6.0	6.8	12.1	13.1	8.99	3.26
with	4.8	11.1	10.1	7.6	11.3	15.4	10.4	13.4	14.3	11.0	14.1	10.8	10.7	11.14	12.9	16.3	13.8	16.9	12.3	10.7	14.4	13.90	-2.23
him	10.8	16.8	13.3	8.6	13.2	20.8	17.9	11.9	12.0	13.2	9.8	5.8	7.8	12.47	6.5	12.0	12.9	6.5	11.5	9.6	14.4	10.47	1.10
all	11.0	11.8	9.9	10.1	11.1	9.1	9.9	10.4	13.9	12.8	14.8	13.7	10.1	11.42	14.9	13.6	13.4	9.8	12.8	9.0	12.6	12.30	-0.98
for	13.8	11.6	11.7	10.7	12.3	12.7	11.3	10.4	11.2	11.0	12.6	15.3	11.1	11.97	9.8	12.3	10.0	10.8	10.4	10.0	13.3	10.94	1.62
war	6.5	11.3	10.7	6.2	8.0	8.6	7.8	13.7	14.5	9.5	11.9	9.2	15.9	10.29	20.5	10.4	11.4	15.9	14.2	13.8	10.3	13.78	-2.29
wes	12.3	13.4	11.1	13.3	11.1	8.6	8.5	8.3	9.4	14.7	10.7	5.3	11.3	10.62	12.9	15.0	11.6	11.1	10.4	10.7	10.3	11.71	-1.00

Appendix 5

Comparison of Scottish and Irish Books

t at 95% confidence level is 1.73
(significant values highlighted)

Book	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	15(S)	16(S)	17	18(S)	19	20	Mean	14	15(I)	16(I)	18(I)	Mean	t-value
and	49.39	57.63	54.18	49.47	54.07	50.76	49.46	51.24	53.43	60.54	55.10	52.67	55.59	47.20	48.77	53.10	62.22	49.18	53.88	53.05	48.33	46.39	48.33	49.83	48.22	2.34
the	29.83	44.47	45.35	39.82	50.30	47.36	45.69	48.26	46.49	53.48	40.79	38.71	39.53	45.72	44.53	49.63	45.41	35.99	40.28	43.77	44.11	38.17	41.30	38.23	40.45	1.01
that	41.87	36.05	38.99	40.44	38.96	38.98	36.74	44.98	35.89	36.40	36.50	41.88	45.09	31.96	41.98	43.01	32.24	38.63	38.52	38.90	38.21	42.28	35.66	49.15	41.33	-1.08
thai	12.28	24.21	22.98	21.96	14.88	17.45	27.08	21.45	26.92	21.54	22.66	28.18	28.21	17.70	31.38	32.59	25.43	32.41	19.89	23.64	44.96	30.53	19.24	34.13	32.22	-2.35
he	33.59	28.16	28.73	18.47	32.59	39.66	34.86	33.36	22.63	23.77	21.95	9.74	19.15	30.48	23.75	16.71	28.61	18.47	25.93	25.82	14.61	16.44	26.75	23.21	20.25	1.40
to	23.82	19.74	19.91	18.88	19.36	15.64	13.66	18.17	17.54	20.43	20.75	18.96	15.44	16.72	19.93	20.18	19.98	17.90	21.15	18.85	16.86	19.96	19.24	17.75	18.45	0.33
thar	8.77	16.05	13.54	13.55	8.74	12.24	16.25	19.36	19.37	12.44	17.65	20.28	21.41	18.19	20.78	22.50	26.34	23.93	17.88	17.33	30.35	21.14	18.30	15.70	21.37	-1.44
his	15.54	18.95	17.44	12.73	23.38	17.90	18.61	19.66	25.69	16.16	15.98	8.16	13.18	20.16	15.69	10.59	15.89	12.25	18.38	16.65	8.71	12.92	17.83	7.51	11.74	2.08
in	18.05	15.00	12.72	16.83	19.60	13.82	15.54	13.70	14.27	16.53	13.36	14.22	16.47	13.77	18.66	14.72	14.99	14.32	13.09	15.25	16.58	16.44	19.71	16.38	17.28	-1.94
thaim	6.02	10.79	14.78	11.90	8.97	13.60	11.78	16.38	14.27	10.58	17.41	15.01	16.88	11.31	25.45	14.72	19.07	15.45	6.80	13.75	19.95	14.68	10.79	9.56	13.74	0.00
off	18.80	18.42	15.80	16.42	17.24	15.64	7.07	13.11	19.58	13.56	15.51	9.48	10.50	6.88	4.66	5.96	5.90	12.06	13.09	12.61	13.21	3.52	8.45	8.19	8.34	1.65
with	4.76	11.05	10.06	7.59	11.33	15.41	10.36	13.40	14.27	10.96	14.07	10.80	10.71	16.22	13.99	16.87	10.45	10.74	14.35	11.97	12.92	16.44	13.61	15.02	14.50	-1.62
him	10.78	16.84	13.34	8.62	13.22	20.85	17.90	11.92	12.03	13.18	9.78	5.79	7.82	13.77	13.99	6.45	11.35	9.61	14.35	12.19	6.46	9.98	11.73	11.60	9.95	1.11
all	11.03	11.84	9.85	10.06	11.10	9.06	9.89	10.43	13.87	12.81	14.79	13.70	10.09	12.78	12.72	9.76	12.72	9.04	12.59	11.48	14.89	14.68	14.08	12.97	14.15	-2.95
for	13.79	11.58	11.70	10.67	12.28	12.69	11.30	10.43	11.22	10.96	12.64	15.28	11.12	10.82	8.91	10.75	9.99	9.99	13.34	11.55	9.83	14.09	11.26	10.92	11.53	0.02
war	6.52	11.32	10.67	6.16	8.03	8.61	7.77	13.70	14.48	9.47	11.93	9.22	15.85	8.85	13.57	15.88	12.26	13.76	10.32	10.97	20.51	12.33	8.92	17.06	14.71	-2.01
wes	12.28	13.42	11.08	13.34	11.10	8.61	8.48	8.34	9.38	14.67	10.73	5.27	11.32	16.22	11.03	11.08	9.08	10.74	10.32	10.87	12.92	13.51	12.20	12.29	12.73	-1.45

Appendix 6

t at 95% confidence level is 1.73
(significant values highlighted)

Comparison of Low and High Historicity Books

Book	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	14	Mean	2	10	11	12	13	15	16	17	18	19	20	Mean	t-value
and	49.4	54.2	49.5	54.1	50.8	49.5	51.2	53.4	48.3	51.15	57.6	60.5	55.1	52.7	55.6	46.8	48.6	53.1	57.3	49.2	53.9	53.67	-1.63
the	29.8	45.4	39.8	50.3	47.4	45.7	48.3	46.5	44.1	44.13	44.5	53.5	40.8	38.7	39.5	42.3	43.0	49.6	42.5	36.0	40.3	42.79	0.54
that	41.9	39.0	40.4	39.0	39.0	36.7	45.0	35.9	38.2	39.45	36.1	36.4	36.5	41.9	45.1	36.7	39.0	43.0	39.0	38.6	38.5	39.16	0.23
thai	12.3	23.0	22.0	14.9	17.4	27.1	21.4	26.9	45.0	23.33	24.2	21.5	22.7	28.2	28.2	23.5	25.6	32.6	28.9	32.4	19.9	26.16	-0.89
he	33.6	28.7	18.5	32.6	39.7	34.9	33.4	22.6	14.6	28.72	28.2	23.8	21.9	9.7	19.1	24.1	25.2	16.7	26.5	18.5	25.9	21.78	2.25
to	23.8	19.9	18.9	19.4	15.6	13.7	18.2	17.5	16.9	18.20	19.7	20.4	20.8	19.0	15.4	18.2	19.6	20.2	19.1	17.9	21.1	19.22	-1.00
thar	8.8	13.5	13.5	8.7	12.2	16.3	19.4	19.4	30.3	15.80	16.1	12.4	17.7	20.3	21.4	19.5	19.6	22.5	22.1	23.9	17.9	19.40	-1.57
his	15.5	17.4	12.7	23.4	17.9	18.6	19.7	25.7	8.7	17.74	18.9	16.2	16.0	8.2	13.2	16.9	16.7	10.6	12.5	12.2	18.4	14.52	1.67
in	18.0	12.7	16.8	19.6	13.8	15.5	13.7	14.3	16.6	15.68	15.0	16.5	13.4	14.2	16.5	15.0	19.2	14.7	15.5	14.3	13.1	15.22	0.52
thain	6.0	14.8	11.9	9.0	13.6	11.8	16.4	14.3	19.9	13.07	10.8	10.6	17.4	15.0	16.9	12.8	18.5	14.7	15.3	15.5	6.8	14.02	-0.56
off	18.8	15.8	16.4	17.2	15.6	7.1	13.1	19.6	13.2	15.21	18.4	13.6	15.5	9.5	10.5	5.4	6.5	6.0	6.8	12.1	13.1	10.65	2.49
with	4.8	10.1	7.6	11.3	15.4	10.4	13.4	14.3	12.9	11.12	11.1	11.0	14.1	10.8	10.7	16.3	13.8	16.9	12.3	10.7	14.4	12.91	-1.40
him	10.8	13.3	8.6	13.2	20.8	17.9	11.9	12.0	6.5	12.79	16.8	13.2	9.8	5.8	7.8	12.0	12.9	6.5	11.5	9.6	14.4	10.93	1.07
all	11.0	9.9	10.1	11.1	9.1	9.9	10.4	13.9	14.9	11.13	11.8	12.8	14.8	13.7	10.1	13.6	13.4	9.8	12.8	9.0	12.6	12.22	-1.28
for	13.8	11.7	10.7	12.3	12.7	11.3	10.4	11.2	9.8	11.55	11.6	11.0	12.6	15.3	11.1	12.3	10.0	10.8	10.4	10.0	13.3	11.67	-0.19
war	6.5	10.7	6.2	8.0	8.6	7.8	13.7	14.5	20.5	10.72	11.3	9.5	11.9	9.2	15.9	10.4	11.4	15.9	14.2	13.8	10.3	12.16	-0.89
wes	12.3	11.1	13.3	11.1	8.6	8.5	8.3	9.4	12.9	10.62	13.4	14.7	10.7	5.3	11.3	15.0	11.6	11.1	10.4	10.7	10.3	11.32	-0.66

Appendix 7

t-test for Independent Samples

The **t-test** is the most commonly used method to evaluate the differences in means between two groups. An example of independent groups may be to test the height of a sample of men against that of a sample of women, or the height of a sample of sportsmen against a sample of businessmen. [*An example of a test for dependent samples would be to measure the appropriate skill level of a group of workers before a training programme with the skill level of the same group after they had been through the training programme.*]

The **p-level** reported with a *t*-test represents the probability of error involved in accepting our research hypothesis about the existence of a difference. Technically speaking, this is the probability of error associated with rejecting the hypothesis of no difference between the two categories of observations (corresponding to the groups) in the population when, in fact, the hypothesis is true.

For the tests carried out here, a p-level of 0.05 was used. This corresponds to a **confidence level** of 95%. It corresponds to a **t value** of 1.73 (from tables of t values). This means that if a calculated t value (in Appendices 5, 6, 7 and 8) is more than +1.73 or less than -1.73, we can be 95% certain that the difference in mean values is systematic, that is, not due to some chance variation.

Appendix 8

Cluster Analysis

Clustering techniques have been applied to a wide variety of research problems. For example, in the field of medicine, clustering diseases, cures for diseases, or symptoms of diseases can lead to very useful taxonomies. In the field of psychiatry, the correct diagnosis of clusters of symptoms such as paranoia, schizophrenia, etc. is essential for successful therapy. In archeology, researchers have attempted to establish taxonomies of stone tools, funeral objects, etc. by applying cluster analytic techniques. In general, whenever one needs to classify large quantities of information into manageable meaningful amounts, cluster analysis is of great utility. Two types of clustering methods are used in this dissertation, employing two completely different clustering algorithms, so that one gives a check on the reliability of the other.

Hierarchical Tree Clustering

As this technique proceeds, the analyst gradually relaxes the criterion regarding what is and is not unique among the objects being classified (in this case, Books of *The Bruce*). Accordingly, the analyst lowers the threshold regarding the decision when to declare two or more objects to be members of the same cluster. As a result, more and more objects are linked together, and this aggregates larger and larger clusters of increasingly dissimilar elements. Finally, in the last step, all objects are joined together. In the tree diagram or dendrogram (see Figure 3), the horizontal axis denotes the linkage distance. Thus, for each node in the dendrogram (where a new

cluster is formed), the criterion distance may be read off at which the respective elements were linked together into a new single cluster. When the data contains a clear “structure” in terms of clusters of objects that are similar to each other in some systematic manner, then this structure will be reflected in the dendrogram as distinct branches. In a successful analysis, the clusters (branches) may be detected and interpreted.

K-means Clustering

This method of clustering is very different from the hierarchical method. Suppose that the analyst already has hypotheses concerning the number of clusters in the objects (Books). The computer can be “told” to form (say) exactly 3 clusters that are to be as distinct as possible. This is the type of research question that can be addressed by the k-means clustering algorithm. In general, the k-means method will produce exactly k different clusters of greatest possible distinction. In the present case, the hypothesis about cluster numbers is derived from the dendrogram, then confirmed with k-means clustering.

The computer will start with k random clusters, and then move objects between those clusters with the goal to (1) minimize variability within clusters and (2) maximize variability between clusters. In k-means clustering, the program tries to move objects (Books) in and out of groups (clusters) to get the most significant results in tests of analysis of variance.

Appendix 9

Non-Hierarchical Cluster Solution

Cluster Members and Distances from Cluster Centroids

	Members of Cluster	Distance from Cluster Centroid
Cluster 1	Book 1	0.00
Cluster 2	Book 14	0.00
Cluster 3	Book 12	3.10
	Book 13	2.12
	Book 15 (I)	2.35
	Book 17	2.83
	Book 18 (I)	3.18
	Book 19	2.73
Cluster 4	Book 2	2.00
	Book 3	1.80
	Book 4	3.30
	Book 9	3.11
	Book 10	3.15
	Book 11	2.15
	Book 16 (I)	2.85
	Book 20	2.18
Cluster 5	Book 5	3.21
	Book 6	2.50
	Book 7	2.67
	Book 8	2.74
	Book 15 (S)	3.08
Cluster 6	Book 16 (S)	2.57
	Book 18 (S)	2.57

Appendix 10

Summary of subject matter of each Book

Book 1 contains introductory material, outlining Barbour's basic purpose in writing the poem, identifying the main characters, and setting out a brief and selective historical background. At line 225 (to 274), there is the famous and much quoted panegyric on freedom. While this section has been much commented on, there has been little or no focus on the complete lack of similarly constructed passages anywhere else in the poem. While it could be argued that there is a gradual style change from line 190 to line 224, it is clear that there is an abrupt change in style at line 275 back to what is "normal" for Book 1 and, perhaps, the rest of the poem. The historical review ends at line 476 and the narrative proper begins with the discussion between John Comyn and Robert Bruce about the state of the kingdom and its kingship. It could be argued that line 476 is a more appropriate ending for Book 1, as the last line of Pinkerton's Book 1 (630) runs directly into line 1 of Book 2.

Book 2 continues discussion of the Bruce-Comyn pact, through Comyn's death and Longshanks' reaction to it. At line 91 there is change of narrative line to James Douglas and how he joined the about-to-be-crowned Robert Bruce. At line 175, another change takes us back to Robert Bruce, a brief description of his coronation, the battle of Methven, and the king's flight over the Mounth to Aberdeen, then over the hills to "head of Tay". This section also contains a brief comparison of the ladies with the king's party and the women who helped take Thebes (lines 531-554).

The narrative continues into **Book 3** with the battle of Dail Righ. There is another classical allusion at lines 73-92. The narrative continues with the first attack by three men on King Robert (he kills all three), and praise for the king from an enemy. A further classical allusion takes up lines 187-266. The king tells stories to his followers to keep up morale, then sends the ladies to Kildrummy for safekeeping. The king's party crosses Loch Lomond. King Robert reads from the romance of Fierabras to encourage his party. Once across Loch Lomond, Lennox joins the king's party. There is a reflective piece on men weeping (lines 513-534). The party escapes to Dunaverty, then Rathlin. The end of the Book, at line 762, is a clear break point in the narrative.

Book 4 begins with a condemnation of the behaviour of the English in Scotland, well illustrated by the harsh treatment of prisoners after the fall of Kildrummy. The death of Longshanks is related in some detail, together with a long allusion (lines 238-307) to the story of Count Ferrand. At line 335, there is an abrupt change of narrative line, with the attack on Arran by Douglas and Boyd. The king comes to Arran and is advised by a woman where to find Sir James Douglas. The king sends a spy to Carrick in advance of landing his force there. As he prepares to cross to Carrick, a woman predicts ultimate success for the king (lines 632-667).

There follows a discourse on prophecy (lines 668-775), which appears to give a quite definitive end-point. However, if lines 632-775 of Book 4 are seen as an interjection, then **Book 5** continues the narrative with the invasion of Carrick and the attack on Turnberry Castle. A kinswoman gives the king news and forty of her men. At line 225, the narrative line passes to Sir James Douglas, who goes into Douglasdale to carry out an attack on his own castle, held by the English. The

narrative passes back to the king (line 463) with the second attack by three men. He kills all three.

The narrative continues in **Book 6**, with de Valence praising King Robert for his feat in killing the three assassins. The men of Galloway pursue the king and his party with a tracker dog. Alone, the king defends a ford against his pursuers, killing many. There is a classical allusion to Tydeus of Thebes (lines 181-286), and a comment on valour (lines 323-374). At line 375, the story passes back to Sir James Douglas and another attack on Douglas Castle. By line 453, we are back with King Robert; he is pursued by John Lorn and a tracker dog (which previously belonged to the king). The king's party divides to escape and he is left alone with his foster brother. They kill five pursuers.

The narrative continues in **Book 7**, with two alternative accounts of how King Robert escaped from the pursuing hound. Again, the king is attacked by three men, who kill his foster brother before he kills all three. He is reunited with his men, and a woman gives her two sons as followers. The Scots attack and defeat an enemy force. The king is again attacked by three men, and kills them. He discovers an enemy spy (a woman), then defeats the English at Glen Trool.

In **Book 8**, King Robert moves into Kyle. Douglas defeats an English force under Sir Philip Mowbray, then the king defeats de Valence in a set piece battle at Loudoun Hill. There is a break in the story line at line 391, as the king goes over the Mounth. At line 416, Sir James Douglas plans and executes another attack on Douglas Castle. The love letter of Sir John Webiton, keeper of the castle, is discovered and described (lines 488-499).

In **Book 9** we are back with King Robert. He falls ill at Inverurie, and Sir Edward Bruce takes temporary command. There is a discourse on leadership (lines 63-101).

The king is taken to Slioch where there is a skirmish. The harrying of Buchan and the fall of Forfar Castle follow the battle of Old Meldrum. Then King Robert besieges and takes Perth, giving him control of Scotland north of the Forth. Sir Edward Bruce goes to Galloway and defeats the English at the Cree, then tackles a much larger English force with only fifty mounted men. Barbour praises Sir Edward for his valour. At line 677, the story switches back to Douglas, who captures Randolph in the Forest and takes him to the king. Randolph is temporarily put into custody.

In **Book 10**, King Robert defeats John of Lorn at the Pass of Brander. There is a description of how William Bunnock led the taking of Lithgow Peel. A profile of Randolph, now earl of Moray, follows (lines 259-304). Moray lays siege to Edinburgh castle. Douglas takes Roxburgh castle. Moray then takes Edinburgh castle. There is a classical allusion to the taking of Tyre by Alexander the Great (lines 704-740), and a prophecy of St. Margaret is described (lines 741-758). The narrative line moves to Sir Edward Bruce (line 793), the castles he took in Galloway, his siege of Stirling castle, and his agreement with its governor, Sir Philip Mowbray.

In **Book 11**, Sir Philip Mowbray takes news of the Stirling agreement to Caernarfon. King Robert criticises his brother for the agreement. There is a long passage (lines 69-210) about Caernarfon's preparations for battle and his march to Edinburgh. The mustering, preparation, tactics and command structure of King Robert's army are described (lines 211-354). The Scots dig pits by the roadside. On Sunday 22nd June 1314 the Scots prepare themselves physically and spiritually, and the king outlines the dispositions for his force. Sir James Douglas and Sir Robert Keith ride out to evaluate the English, but King Robert gives his men a doctored account of the enemy strength and organisation. The English send a cavalry force

under Clifford to relieve the castle, avoiding the New Park. Moray comes out to meet Clifford and the earl's spearmen are surrounded. Moray gets the better of a tough fight, though Douglas gets the king's permission to go to Moray's assistance. The battle of Bannockburn is now well under way.

The narrative continues without a break into **Book 12**. At the end of the first day, the king discusses tactics with his men, and they decide to fight again on to the next day. The English bivouac down on the carse, and have an uncomfortable night. Next morning both armies prepare for battle. Caernarfon rejects tactical advice and the battle is joined. Sir Edward Bruce's division attacks, followed by earl Moray.

The narrative continues without a break into **Book 13**. Sir James Douglas's division attacks. Sir Robert Keith's light cavalry disperses the English archers. The king's division now joins the attack and the fighting becomes intense. The small folk join the attack. The Scots press and the English army begins to break up. Caernarfon leaves the field and the English army breaks up completely. Caernarfon escapes via Stirling castle and is pursued to Dunbar by Sir James Douglas. Hereford is captured at Bothwell. On the battlefield, the English loot is gathered. Gloucester is buried. Stirling castle surrenders and is razed to the ground. In an exchange of prisoners, King Robert's wife and daughter, the bishop of Glasgow and others return to Scotland. The king's daughter is married to Sir Walter Stewart. King Robert settles affairs in Scotland, and begins a series of attacks on northern England.

Book 14 starts a new narrative line. Sir Edward Bruce goes to Ireland, wins an initial skirmish near Carrickfergus, another against two Irish sub-kings, then beats a major English force near Dundalk. Dundalk is taken, and the Scots drink and brawl for a few days. The English are beaten again near Kilross forest. The Scots are betrayed by an Irish sub-king, O'Dempsey, but are rescued and ferried across the

Bann by Thomas Dun. The Scots and English manoeuvre around Connor with some skirmishing.

The narrative continues into **Book 15**. The Scots win the battle of Connor with great slaughter. Carrickfergus Castle is besieged. An English force is introduced into the castle, despite a truce, and attack the Scots. After a fierce running battle in the streets of Carrickfergus, the English are eventually defeated, and the castle surrenders. The narrative now switches to Scotland and the king. He sails to the Isles to confirm his control. Meanwhile, Edmund de Caillou attacks the Merse, but is pursued and killed by Sir James Douglas. Sir Robert Melville challenges Douglas on another occasion; he is also beaten and killed. Douglas's reputation is now very considerable (lines 551-574).

In **Book 16**, action switches back to Ireland. The king leaves Scotland in the care of Sir James Douglas and Sir Walter Stewart, and takes a force to Ireland to help his brother. The Scots march south, avoid an ambush and deliver another defeat to the English forces. King Robert criticises Sir Edward Bruce for over-zealousness. The Scots move around the south of Ireland, but are not impeded in any way. At Limerick, the king holds up the army's march while a laundrywoman is in childbirth. This may well be a motif, though perhaps not introduced for standard motif purposes, and it need not be untrue.. Instead, it may be a device to draw attention, yet again, between the characters of the king and his brother. The Irish sub-kings do homage to Sir Edward Bruce, whose character and achievements are reviewed (lines 318-334). The narrative line now switches back to Scotland (line 335). In the king's absence, Sir James Douglas defeats an invading force under Sir Thomas Richmond. His exploits are described (lines 493-542). Another invading force lands in Fife, but

is defeated by the bishop of Dunkeld. The king returns from Ireland and praises the bishop.

In **Book 17**, the narrative line moves to Berwick, which is still in English hands. The Scots attack and take the town. Subsequently, the castle also falls to the Scots. The king puts Sir Walter Stewart in charge, and he builds up the defences, the garrison, and its provisions. The engineer John Crabbe is detailed to assist with the defence of Berwick. Caernarfon besieges Berwick by land and sea, but assaults from both directions are rebuffed. The king sends a diversionary force to England, which slaughters a makeshift defence force at Myton. Back at Berwick, the English make great efforts to break the defences, but Sir Walter Stewart's defence holds out. Hearing of the Myton disaster, the English withdraw and the Scots invaders return home. Sir Walter Stewart is praised (lines 912-935). The king raises another force to help his brother in Ireland.

The narrative line continues into **Book 18**. Without waiting for reinforcements, Sir Edward Bruce impulsively attacks the English near Dundalk. He is defeated and killed. He is criticised (lines 175-210). The action now moves back to Scotland. Caernarfon invades with a large force, but is forced to withdraw because of the king's scorched-earth tactics. Douglas attacks and destroys an advance party of the retreating English at Melrose. The king invades England, and wins a major victory at Byland. Many noble prisoners are taken for ransom. Some French knights are captured with the English prisoners; the French are released without ransom.

The narrative line changes substantially in **Book 19**, with a description of the Soules conspiracy and its aftermath. Sir Ingram Umfraville leaves the Scots and returns to Caernarfon's peace. Sir Walter Stewart dies. The earl of Moray and Sir

James Douglas harry Weardale, skirmish across the Wear with a large English force led by the new English king, Windsor, and eventually slip away back to Scotland.

The narrative line continues into **Book 20**. After Moray and Douglas return from the Weardale campaign, the king ravages Northumberland until the English sue for peace. The peace includes a marriage between the king's son and Windsor's sister, a cancellation of all English claims to sovereignty over Scotland, and an indemnity of £20,000 to be paid by the king. David is crowned and the succession settled. King Robert retires to Cardross and dies. Sir James Douglas carries his heart against the Saracens and is killed in battle. His bones and the king's heart are returned to Scotland. Douglas is compared to Fabricius (lines 501-578). Moray rules wisely as regent, but is poisoned and dies.