Game: **HAMMER OF THE SCOTS** Pub: **©2002 Columbia Games**	**v1** **Apr 2010**
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Hammer of the Scots

Setup

One player plays the **Scots** (blue blocks), the other player plays the **English** (red blocks).

The object is to control a majority of Scottish nobles at the end of the game. The two scenarios, *Braveheart* (1297–1305) and *The Bruce* (1306–1314) can be played as separate games, or as a campaign game extending over both periods.

Setup the board according to the scenario instructions.

Both players start the first year with **5 cards each.**

Armies

Block Characteristics

When the blocks are standing upright, blocks face their owning player and their characteristics are hidden from your opponent.

The **Strength** of a block is the number of symbols on the top edge when the block is standing upright. Strength (1-4) determines how many d6 are thrown for a block in combat. For each hit taken in combat, the block's strength is reduced by 1 by *rotating* the block.

The **Movement** of a block is shown on its bottom left-hand corner.

The **Combat Rating** of a block is a letter and number on its bottom right-hand corner. The letter determines when a block attacks (all A blocks attack first, then all B blocks, then all C blocks). The number indicates the *maximum* roll on a d6 that will score a hit.

Block Types

The Scots have two Leaders: *Wallace* and the *King*. The English have one Leader: *Edward,* who represents Edward I until 1307 and then Edward II.

There are 14 **Nobles**, each identified by their heraldic arms. Nobles are either loyal to the *Bruce* faction or the *Comyn* faction.

Each noble (except *Moray*) has 2 blocks. Only 1 block is play at a time: *Red* when supporting the English, and *Blue* when supporting the Scots.

English infantry are named after their counties. The English also have one *Welsh* (red dragon) and *Ulster* (green cross) infantry.

Scottish Infantry are namd after prominent clans.

Other block types are **Archers**, **Light Cavalry** and **Knights.**

The **French knights** enter the game only under special rules.

The **Norse** block represents possible intervention by Norway, which at this time controlled much of the area north of Ross, including the Orkney and Shetland Islands; or by the warlike clans of Norse origin from the Outer Hebrides. The block has special movement abilities.

Sequence of Play

Each Year consists of 1-5 **Game Turns**. Each Game Turn has 4 **Phases**:

1. Card Phase

Each player plays 1 card facedown. They are revealed simultaneously and the higher card has the first move. Ties go to the English player.

2. Move Phase

Depending on the card played, 1, 2, or 3 **Group Moves** may be made.

Blocks may move up to 3 areas per Move Phase depending on their move rate, but must stop upon crossing a red border or entering an enemy-occupied area.

3. Battle Phase

Battles occur when enemy blocks are located in the same area, and are fought one by one in a sequence determined by the first player.

After all battles are fought, repeat steps 1 to 3 until a Year ends.

After each Year ends, the **Winter Turn** is played.

Nobles return home (perhaps to switch sides), and armies move into **winter quarters**.

Both players receive **replacements**, and **5 new cards** to start the new year.

Card Phase

At the beginning of each year, all cards are shuffled and 5 are dealt out facedown to each player. Players may then examine their cards before the year begins.

Both players start a Game Turn by playing one card facedown.

The cards are then revealed and the higher card determines **Player 1** for that Game Turn (English wins ties).

Players may choose to pass but effects cannot be saved for future use.

Move Cards allow 1, 2, or 3 **group moves** according to the card value.

Event cards allow a special action as noted on the card. They are always resolved first (the player of the card is Player 1).

If both players play an Event card, both events are resolved (English player first) **and then the year ends.**

Initiative

Card values determine play order each Game Turn.

The higher card (English wins ties) is **Player 1** and must play first.

Move Phase

Players are never compelled to move. They must play a card, but can do nothing. Moves cannot be saved.

Blocks may pass freely through friendly blocks, but must stop and fight a battle when they enter any area containing one or more enemy blocks.

Blocks only move once per Game Turn, except to **Retreat** or **Regroup**.

All blocks (even one) located in one area are a **group**. Players may move as many groups as the number on the card they play. A player can move any number of the blocks in a group to one or more areas within their move rating.

Border Limits

Per Movement Phase, a maximum of 6 blocks can cross a black border, and a maximum of 2 can cross a red border.

Border limits are applied separately to each player. Once a border maximum is met, it is closed to movement by *that* player this Game Turn.

Blocks crossing a red border must stop.

Border limits are applied to each player—*ie*, both players can move 2 blocks across the same red border.

The Anglo-Scottish Border is a heavy red or black broken line. Blocks entering England must stop. Blocks entering Scotland must stop only if they cross the red broken border into *Teviot*.

Each point of movement allows only 1 block (not group) to cross the Anglo-Scottish border. Blocks attacking across the Anglo-Scottish border into the same area fight as 1 group (no reserves).

Area Control

Areas can either be **friendly**, **neutral**, or **enemy** controlled. Changes to area control are effective immediately.

Friendly: areas occupied by your blocks.
Enemy: areas occupied by enemy blocks.
Neutral: vacant areas occupied by neither player.

Pinning

All attacking blocks (including *Reserves*) prevent an equal number of defending blocks from moving.

The Defender chooses which blocks are pinned. The 'unpinned' blocks may move normally and attack, except they cannot cross any border used by the enemy to start the battle.

Norse Movement

The **Norse** block moves separately from other blocks. It requires 1 movement point to move all by itself, and can move from a coastal area to any other Scottish coastal area and/or attack.

The block may *Retreat* or *Regroup* to any friendly (but not neutral) Scottish coastal area. It cannot enter England.

Battle Phase

Battles are fought one by one after all movement is completed; each must be completed before the next.

Player 1 determines which battle is fought first *before* examining any enemy blocks. Reveal blocks by tipping them forward to maintain current Strength.

After that battle is completed, return all blocks upright, and Player 1 then selects the next battle. He need not commit to any specific sequence of battles in advance.

Celtic Unity

Each time **Ulster** and **Welsh** (infantry and archers) blocks are in battle, roll a die before combat to test the loyalty of each block.

1-4: No effect
5-6: Block goes into the Draw Pool

Combat Rounds

Battles are fought for a maximum of **3 combat rounds**. The attacker must *retreat* if a battle is not concluded by the end of the third round.

Because both players move before combat, a player can be a Defender in some battles, and an Attacker in others.

Combat Turns

Each block has 1 Combat Turn per Combat Round. In its Combat Turn, a block may either **Fire**, **Retreat**, or **Pass**.

The sequence of Combat Turns depends on combat ratings. All **A blocks** go before all **B blocks**, which go before all **C blocks**. *Defending* **A blocks** go before *Attacking* **A blocks**, and so on.

After all blocks have taken 1 Combat Turn, 1 Combat Round has been fought. Repeat for a second or third round as necessary.

Combat Reserves

A player may attack via different borders, or attack using 2 or 3 group moves. One group crossing the same border must be declared the **Main Attack**. All other friendly blocks are placed in **Reserve**.

Main Attack blocks must start the turn in the same area and cross the same border into battle. All other blocks are in Reserve. Main Attack blocks cannot be voluntarily placed in the Reserve.

Blocks moved by Player 2 to reinforce a battle started by Player 1 are Reserves.

Reserve blocks may not fire, retreat, or take hits in Combat Round 1. They are revealed at the beginning of Round 2, even if all other friendly blocks have been eliminated, and thereafter take normal Combat Turns.

Battlefield Control changes if the Attacker wins in Round 1 before Defending reserves arrive. The Attacker is now the Defender for further combat.

Combat Resolution

Each block in its combat turn rolls as many dice as its current **Strength**. A hit is scored for each die roll *equal to or lower* than the block's **Combat Rating**.

Nobles fire at B3 *defending* their Home Area, even if they move there this Game Turn or defected during battle.

To reflect the dynamics of battles involving Scottish schiltrons, **all Scottish infantry fire at +1 in battles when the English side has no archers.**

Each hit is applied to the *strongest* enemy block. When 2 or more blocks share the highest Strength, the owner chooses which to reduce.

Combat is not simultaneous. All hits are applied immediately.

Retreats

Each block may **Retreat** (instead of attacking) on its normal Combat Turn. They need not all retreat to the same area.

Before retreating, blocks are flipped back upright (facing their owner) to hide from the enemy which are retreating.

- Blocks retreat to adjacent Friendly or Neutral areas.
- Border Limits for retreat apply to each Combat Round and the attacker's mandatory retreat after 3 rounds.
- Blocks may not retreat through borders used by the enemy player to enter the battle. When both players use the same border, only the last player entering may retreat via this border during this battle.
- Blocks may never retreat to an area where there is another unfought battle.
- Blocks that cannot retreat when required are eliminated.
- The English player may never retreat into Scotland. The Scottish player may never retreat into England.
- The Norse block may Retreat to any Friendly (not Neutral) coastal area. It cannot enter England.

Regrouping

When a battle ends the victor may **Regroup**. All victorious blocks (including any in Reserve) may move to any adjacent Friendly or Neutral area. Blocks cannot Regroup to an unfought battle.

The Norse block can Regroup to any Friendly (not Neutral) coastal area. It cannot enter England.

Border Limits apply for Regroups. Only Scottish blocks may Regroup into Scotland, and only English blocks may Regroup into England.

Capturing Nobles

When an noble is eliminated in combat, it immediately switches to the enemy side (exchange block color) at Strength 1 and is placed in Reserve. Captured nobles fight for their new side beginning in the next combat round.

The Scots noble Moray never changes allegiance. If eliminated in battle his block is removed from the game.

Eliminated Blocks

Eliminated blocks are placed in a player's **Draw Pool** and may return to the game during an English *Feudal Levy* or Scots *Winter Build*.

When eliminated in Battle, blocks with a **black cross** are permanently eliminated.

All blocks eliminated as a consequence of the *Pillage* card, *Border Raids*, or *Winter Attrition* are disbanded to the Draw Pool.

Border Raids

The Scottish player may invade England. This costs 1 movement point per block to cross the Border.

If a Scots force occupies England, the English player must eliminate 1 non-Noble block at the end of every Game Turn.

If the English player has only noble blocks on the board, then no blocks are eliminated.

Scottish blocks cannot winter in England.

Wintering

A game Year ends if both players play an Event card at the same time, or after all 5 cards have been played. Cards are *never* carried forward into the next year.

When a Year ends, there is a special **Winter Turn**. Play the Winter actions in the following order:

1. Nobles Go Home

All nobles, **English nobles first,** *must* return to their Home Areas. If that area is enemy-occupied, the noble defects at current strength.

Moray may decline to return home and remain where located or disband.

The Bruce and Comyn blocks may return to *either* of their Home Areas. If both Home Areas are enemy-occupied, the *enemy* player decides the wintering Home Area.

2. Scottish King

The Scottish King may withdraw to any Friendly or Neutral area with a cathedral, remain where located, or disband.

3. English Disbanding

English blocks are never forced to remain in Scotland. They may disband.

Archers, Knights, and Hobelars *must* disband.

English infantry blocks (including the Welsh and Ulster infantry) may remain in Scotland only if located in an area with sufficient Castle Limits. The English may not disband a Noble to make room for an infantry block.

4. Edward Wintering

If located in Scotland, Edward I may winter there or Disband.

- Neither king may winter in England.
- Edward I cannot spend 2 consecutive winters in Scotland.
- Edward I cannot winter in Scotland in 1306.
- Edward II may not winter in Scotland.

If Edward I winters in Scotland, all red blocks (except Nobles) *may* winter with him regardless of Castle Limits.

If Edward winters, there is no Feudal Levy this winter and England begins the next year empty.

5. Scottish Disbanding

The Wallace block may move to Selkirk (unless occupied by a 'wintering' Edward I) where he regains two RPs.

The Scots player now disbands all blocks that exceed an area's Castle Limit. The Scots player may choose which block(s) to disband.

With the exception of Moray, a Noble cannot disband.

6. Winter Builds

Each friendly area generates **Replacement Points** (RPs) equal to its **Castle Rating**.

Areas with a **Cathedral** generate an extra RP for the Scottish player.

Players now simultaneously use their RPs to strengthen their army.

Scottish Builds: Each RP is used to:

- **Build** one step on one existing block in the same area,

  or

- **Draw** one block and deploy in the same area at strength 1.

RPs can be used in any combination. Multiple steps may be added to one block. Players may Build steps on blocks just drawn.

RPs cannot be saved and are wasted if unusable.

When drawing blocks, Castle Limits must be obeyed.

If the Norse or French block is drawn for an inland area like Badenoch or Lanark, deploy it in any friendly, adjacent coastal area. Castle Limits do not apply in this special case and the new home for the Norse or French may still receive replacement steps if it could do so prior to the redeployment.

French Knights: Once the Scottish player controls 8 or more nobles, the French knight is added to the Scottish Draw Pool and deployed like any other block if drawn. The block remains in play until eliminated in battle.

English Builds: The English player may use RPs generated by areas under his control to strengthen infantry (only) or nobles under his control. The English player cannot use RPs to deploy blocks from the English Draw Pool.

7. English Feudal Levy

The English player receives new blocks by a **Feudal Levy**, *except* when the English King has wintered in Scotland.

- Shuffle all blocks (face-down) in the Draw Pool.
- Draw one half (round up).
- Deploy blocks at **full strength** in the England area.

8. New Cards

Shuffle and deal out 5 new cards to each player.

The next year is now played.

Kings

English Kings

The Edward block represents Edward I until killed in combat, or until the end of 1306, when it then becomes Edward II. The switch to Edward II has two game effects:

- Edward II cannot winter in Scotland.
- If Edward II is eliminated in combat, the Scots win a Sudden Death Victory.

Scottish Kings

The Scots do not have a King block at the start of play. Once per game the Scots may crown a king. There are three candidates for the throne: Bruce, Comyn, and Balliol.

To crown either **Bruce** or **Comyn**:

- Wallace must be dead.
- The candidate must be located in Fife.
- The Scottish player must play *any* Event card, announcing **Coronation** instead of the normal event.

The King block is then placed in Fife at full strength. The candidate block remains in play, representing another family member under normal noble rules.

If Bruce becomes king, *all* Comyn nobles except Moray immediately defect to the English.

If Comyn becomes king, *all* Bruce nobles immediately defect to the English.

Any resulting battle is fought immediately with the defecting noble(s) being the attacker.

King Balliol, exiled in France, can return to the throne starting in 1301, provided no other king has been crowned.

- The French knight must be on the map.
- The Scottish player must play *any* Event card, announcing **Return of the King** instead of the normal event.

Wallace may be dead or alive. The king block is then deployed at full strength with the French knight. All Bruce nobles immediately defect to the English.

Victory

The object of the game is to control a majority of Nobles at the end of the scenario.

If both players control 7 nobles (*Moray* in play) the English win if *Wallace* is dead or in the Draw Pool. Otherwise, the Scots win.

Sudden Death Victory

An instant victory occurs when:

- A player controls **all** nobles in play at the end of a Game Turn. *Moray* must be dead or in the Draw Pool for the English to win in this manner.
- The English player wins immediately if the Scottish King is eliminated in battle.
- The Scottish player wins immediately if Edward II is eliminated in battle.

Hammer of the Scots

Scenario 1: Braveheart

The Scottish nobility was reduced after the battle of Dunbar to abject servitude and humiliation. But in the ashes of defeat two courageous young men rose to continue the fight against tremendous odds.

William Wallace had turned brigand in 1294. His murderous guerrilla war against the English culminated in the sack of Lanark in 1297. Suddenly, the invincible English looked invincible no longer. Meanwhile, Andrew de Moray, a young knight from one of Scotland's major land-owning families in the north, launched a bloody uprising in the Highlands.

Scotland, already smoldering with discontent and sporadic resistance by the fall of 1296, flamed into open rebellion by the spring of 1297. It took Longshanks seven years to put out the fire lit by these two heroes.

Duration

1297 through 1305, unless one side achieves a Sudden Death victory.

English Deployment

Place all red blocks in the English Draw Pool, *except* deploy at full strength on the mapboard:

Nobles: All nobles (except Bruce, Moray, and Galloway) in home areas. Comyn is deployed in Badenoch.

Lothian: Cumbria Infantry.

Mentieth: Northumber Infantry.

England: Feudal Levy of 4 blocks.

Edward I starts play in the English Draw Pool. Historically, he was fighting in Flanders in 1297.

Scottish Deployment

Remove the King and French Knights and set aside. Place all other blue blocks in the Scottish Draw Pool, except deploy at full strength on the mapboard:

Annan: Bruce.

Galloway: Galloway.

Fife: Wallace, Douglas, & Barclay.

Moray: Moray, Fraser.

Strathspey: Grant.

Scenario 2: The Bruce

After John Comyn's negotiated surrender to Longshanks in February 1304, an uneasy peace returned to Scotland. Robert Bruce had not supported Comyn's rebellion and resented Edward's betrayal of his promise to deliver him the Scottish throne. Bruce conspired with sympathetic nobles and the leadership of the Scottish church to seize the throne and inspire his countrymen to revolt, a task made easy when news spread of Wallace's brutal execution in August 1305.

Bruce and John Comyn met alone in a Dumfries church. They engaged in violent argument over the wisdom of Bruce's plans; it ended with Bruce's knife in Comyn's heart.

With the absolution of the Scottish clergy, Bruce was crowned at Scone on March 10, 1306, the 10th anniversary of the outbreak of the rebellion. Faced with civil war against Comyn loyalists and imminent attack from England, Bruce desperately assembled an army and prepared for the worst.

Duration

1306 through 1314, unless one side achieves a Sudden Death victory.

English Deployment

Place all red blocks in the English Draw Pool, except deploy at full strength on the mapboard:

Nobles: all Comyn nobles (except Moray) in their home areas. Comyn is deployed in Badenoch.

Moray: Cumbria Infantry.

Mentieth: Mentieth, Northumber Infantry.

Lothian: Durham Infantry.

Lanark: Stewart, Westmor Infantry.

England: Feudal Levy (50% blocks).

Edward I dies at the end of 1306 and the king block then becomes Edward II. Edward I cannot winter in Scotland in 1306.

Scottish Deployment

Remove Wallace and Moray and set aside—both are dead. Place all other blue blocks in the Scottish Draw Pool, except deploy at full strength on the mapboard:

Nobles: all Bruce faction nobles (except Mentieth and Stewart) in their home areas. Bruce is deployed in Carrick.

Fife: King, Douglas, Barclay.

Lennox: Campbell.

Carrick: Lindsay.

HAMMER of the SCOTS

Hammer of the Scots

Edward I directed that his tomb in Westminster Abbey be inscribed with the epitaph Scottorurm Malleus— 'Hammer of the Scots'. Edward certainly intended to hammer the Scots into submission, but his blows served instead to forge a proud nation.

How the War Started

The Scottish Wars of Independence were actually triggered by events in Europe. In 1294, France managed through duplicity to seize control of the Duchy of Gascony, a major province nominally a part of France but retained by Edward I. War ensued, and the Scottish nobles, chafing under the humiliating rule of Edward I through his puppet—King John Balliol of Scotland— eagerly agreed to make common cause with the French.

Edward I, caught off guard by this uncharacteristic display of Scottish defiance, delayed his invasion of Flanders and moved to settle the rebellion north of the Tweed. But King Philip failed to live up to his side of the agreement—which called for an invasion of England should Edward move against Scotland—and the struggle did not last long. After a brutal siege and massacre of half the population of Berwick—Scotland's largest town at the time—Edward moved north to Dunbar. An attempt to break the siege of Dunbar ended with disaster when the smaller English force routed the Scots.

With the imprisonment of most of the Scottish nobility— including King John Balliol—and the complete annexation of Scotland by the English crown, Edward thought the affair over. He haughtily remarked upon leaving Scotland in 1296 that it was "good to be rid of shit."

He would not be rid of the Scots for long.

The Black Douglas

One of the most romanticized figures of the war was James 'The Black' Douglas, a ferocious warrior, daring guerrilla, and brilliant field commander who terrorized the enemy.

The stuff of Douglas' character was inherited from his father, the crusty Sir William Douglas. William was contemptuous of King John Balliol's supplication to the English crown and one of the few Scots never to bow to Edward. An early comrade of Wallace, William Douglas was captured after the debacle at Irvine and died in the Tower of London in 1299.

His son was to avenge his death in spades. One of the Bruce's most trusted lieutenants, James Douglas proved his worth not only on the battlefield but during sieges as well. Douglas was adept at finding means of entry into even the best defended castles and fortresses, and was legendary for savage reprisals on garrison troops who fell into his hands.

On his deathbed Bruce asked Douglas to carry his heart into battle in the Holy Land where it could witness the defeat of the enemies of God. Accordingly, Douglas and a large company of Scottish knights set sail for Castile in 1330 where King Alfonso XI was conducting a campaign against the Moors of Grenada. Douglas, bearing Bruce's heart, was given command of an army at Tebas de Ardales on March 25. There, he and most of his men were slain after being cut-off from the main body of troops. The Moors finally accomplished what the English could not.

Schiltroms

The schiltrom was a formation that grouped footmen into a large hollow square (or oval) and armed them with long spears to resist the deadly charge of heavy horse. Reinforcements were often harbored in the middle of the formation so that men could be rushed to crumbling defensive lines when needed.

Invented by Wallace at Falkirk as a defensive tactic, Bruce improved them by employing battle-hardened veterans capable of moving and attacking in formation, an idea later refined by Swiss Pikemen to devastating effect. Although always vulnerable to massed ranged fire (whether from arrows or cannon), the schiltrom was a revolutionary tactic that reduced the power of knights on the battlefield.

The Longbow

The war was a proving ground for the English longbow, a weapon soon to terrorize the French during the 100 Years War. The longbow had a range of 350-400 yards, but the necessary draw weight of 100-175 pounds required great strength and extensive training. Edward I was the first to appreciate the potential for this terrible weapon and its ability to revolutionize the medieval battlefield.

Scottish archers were few and far between—the shortbowmen and slingers of Etterick Forest were no match for English longbowmen.

Edward the Longshanks

Edward I was one of the leading monarchs of the Middle Ages. He was a noted pioneer of legal reforms; a great architect of administrative justice; an innovator of financial administration; and one of the founders of parliamentary government. European Kings and Popes held him in the highest esteem, and few monarchs ever dominated the English nobility like Edward.

The Song of Lewes, however, compares Edward to a brave lion—proud and fierce—but also unreliable and deceitful. In his later years, Edward's commitment to justice evolved into cruelty and judicial murder. He saw the Scottish war as a rebellion, not a war between nations, and therefore believed that chivalry did not apply. Gruesome executions and lawlessness characterized the war.

Edward's conduct was animated by a fierce determination to preserve, protect, and enhance his rights as King. Yet he was more a savvy opportunist than a Machiavellian strategist. It is doubtful that he had any grand designs on Scotland prior to the death of his cousin and ally King Alexander III of Scotland in 1286.

But when he was asked by the leading men of Scotland to adjudicate the dispute between Bruce and Balliol for the vacant throne (known to historians as 'the Great Cause'), he did not hesitate to assert a long-standing but dormant claim to sovereignty over Scotland.

A battle-hardened veteran of the Montfortian rebellions of 1263-1267, Pope Urban IV's crusade in 1270, and the Welsh wars of 1277, 1282-1283, and 1294-1295, Edward was a capable military commander and a brilliant mobilizer of men, equipment, and victuals. Scottish victories came only when Edward I was absent from Scotland or dead.

The Scottish Nobility

The elimination of a Scottish noble block in combat does not necessarily imply the death of that noble. Nobles were often captured in battle and held hostage to ensure the loyalty of retainers and heirs. Other times, after a brief imprisonment, captured nobles would be pardoned and allowed to go free upon a pledge of loyalty to their captors. The death of a noble on the battlefield meant a new feudal lord of the household, and newly empowered lords often had different ideas about the rebellion than their predecessors.

Beneath the real-politick, however, was a smoldering hatred for the English that could never be extinguished. Observed the English Lancercost Chronicle, a history of the war written at the time:

"In all these aforesaid campaigns the Scots were so divided among themselves that sometimes the father was on the Scottish side and the son on the English, and vice versa; also one brother might be with the Scots and another with the English; yea, even the same individual be first with one party and then with the other. But all those who were with the English were merely feigning, either because it was the stronger party, or in order to save the lands they possessed in England; for their hearts were always with their own people, although their persons might not be so."

The English Levy

By feudal custom, the English king would often petition his major nobles to raise an army, sometimes to fight in France, sometimes in Scotland, sometimes both. Economic and political realities, plus the demands of fighting in France (which was by far the more important of the two areas to the English king) meant that a major campaign into Scotland could not occur every year.

In game terms, the English player will only be able to mount a major campaign into Scotland with a high movement hand. With a good movement hand, it is possible to get as far north as Moray in one year. However, wintering an army with Edward I at Mentieth or Fife is often the only practical way to campaign in the northern highlands.

Comyn & Bruce

The bitter struggle between the Bruce and Comyn factions for control of Scotland defined the conflict.

Robert the Bruce was determined to win the Scottish throne that was—in his mind—wrongfully denied his family after King Alexander III's death in 1286. Bruce's changing allegiances during the first conflict (1297-1304) suggest that his main priority was possession of the crown, not national independence.

The Comyns, on the other hand, were the most powerful members of the Scottish 'war party' and strong supporters of the exiled King John Balliol. This made them not only natural enemies of the Bruce but also implacable foes of the English. They led the rebellion against England after Wallace's defeat at Falkirk in 1298, and made reluctant peace with Edward in 1304 after the English king agreed they could keep their lands. Only when John 'The Red' Comyn, the Lord of Badenoch, was murdered by Bruce in a Dumfries church in 1306 did the Comyns finally turn away from the cause of freedom and make firm alliance with the English.

The Auld Alliance

The Anglo-French conflict constrained Edward's ability to prosecute the war in Scotland. French King Philip's savage naval raids against English seaports in 1295 caused hysteria throughout the realm and ensured that England would concentrate her primary attention southward. The disastrous Flemish campaign in 1297, reinforced anxiety over affairs across the channel.

By 1302, rumors reached England that the French were planning to send the Count of Artois at the head of a large force of knights to return the exiled King John Balliol to the Scottish throne. Alarmed that the Balliol dynasty might be reestablished at his expense, Robert the Bruce defected from the rebellion and made common cause with Edward I, who promised that, should he ever reestablish English authority in Scotland, Bruce would be King.

On July 11, 1302, however, the threat of a French invasion of Scotland was squashed forever. 13,000 men of Flanders adopted the schiltrom tactics pioneered by Wallace at Falkirk and slaughtered 7,500 French horse at the battle of Courtrai. When news of the disaster reached Scotland, the heart went out of the rebellion and Edward confidently turned his full attention to finishing off Comyn and his allies. By 1304, the war—so nearly won by the rebellious Scots two years earlier—had ended. Another, however, was about to begin.

Declaration of Arbroath, April 6, 1320

Yet if he [Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland] should give up what he has begun, and agree to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or the English, we should exert ourselves at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own rights and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King; for, as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor for riches, nor honors that we are fighting, but for freedom—for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.