

The National Wallace Monument

The Laying of the Foundation Stone

Monday 24th June 1861

On Monday 24th June, 1861, the anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, Scotland at last made an effort to atone for neglect of the memory of the patriot, Sir William Wallace, and if numbers and enthusiasm could make up in any manner for that neglect, the effort proved a decided success, for never had so vast a gathering been seen in Scotland's ancient Capital of Stirling.

From early morning, trains arrived from all parts with municipal bodies, Companies of Volunteers, about 200 Lodges of the "Ancient Order of Freemasons of Scotland", representative bodies of the Order of Odd-fellows, Crispins and others. Forty bands of music and pipers discoursed martial and patriotic airs, "Scots Wha Hae", "God Save the Queen", and "The Mason's Anthem" being the favourites.

Various estimates have been made of the numbers present and a reasonable and quite acceptable figure is 80,000/100,000; the procession itself extending fully two miles.

Conspicuous in the line were:

Thirty Companies of Volunteers, representative of as many regiments and under the command of Colonel Griffiths of the Scots Greys. The Commander-in-Chief had granted permission for 400 soldiers being present and 150 policemen were drafted to the District to preserve and prevent accidents on the top of the Abbey Craig.

The various bodies taking part in the procession assembled in the King's Park and moved off after one o'clock, a signal-gun being fired from the Castle and the public bells ringing out a merry peal. The line of route was crowded with spectators and at Causewayhead, the assemblage so dense as to make the road impassable.

The procession, led by two horsemen in ancient armour, was headed by:

- Lt-General Sir James Maxwell Wallace, K.C.B., representative in the male line of the Scottish hero.
- The Grand Marshals: Captain Rothead and Chief-Constable Meffen.
- The various Companies of the Artillery and Rifle Volunteers.
- Curling Clubs.
- Gardeners' Lodges.
- St. Crispin Lodges.
- Members of the Ancient Order and Society of Omnium Gatherum.
- The Master and pupils of Allan's and Cunningham's Schools.
- The Stirling Cadet Corps.
- The Seven Incorporated Trades, bearing the ancient "Blue Blanket"(*).



An early view of the Monument, between 1890 and 1900.

- The Convenor Court.
- The Guildry Officer carrying the Stirling Jug(#).
- Members of the Guildry.
- The Town Officials.
- The Town Chamberlain bearing on a cushion the silver keys of the Burgh.
- The Master-Gunner of Dumbarton Castle carrying the Sword of Sir William Wallace.
- A Servant of the Earl of Elgin carrying the Sword of King Robert The Bruce, and another Sword of King Robert The Bruce, sent for the occasion by Sir James Drummond, Bart., of Hawthorndean.
- The Sword of the Laird of Lundin - supposed to have been used by him at the Battle of Stirling Bridge.
- The Sword of the Black Douglas sent by William Campbell of Tullichewan.
- Martial Banners which had waved at Flodden and numerous other memorials of a bloody fray.



The summit of the Abbey Craig was reached by the Grand Master Mason, namely George 6th Duke of Atholl (Grand Master Mason 1847-1864), who was received by John Tait Esq., Sheriff of the County of Clackmannan, and after the Grand Chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Arnot of Edinburgh had been called upon to invoke the divine blessing on the proceedings, the foundation stone was laid with the usual solemnities. On completion of the formalities the Union Jack was raised on an adjoining flagstaff, acting as a signal to Stirling Castle, and a salute of artillery was discharged from the ramparts.

The Stirling Observer and Midland Counties Advertiser described the scene in Stirling on the day the foundation stone was laid: *"...no such gathering of Scotsmen has ever taken place within the memory of living men, and Stirling presented one of the liveliest and most incongruous of spectacles it has ever been our lot to witness. The streets were swarming with people...and with firmer roads and a sunnier sky, the streets would have had quite the appearance of a Roman Carnival, or a masquerade on the Continent."*

Buried Treasure at The Monument

Fascinatingly, the following documents and items were placed and sealed within a vase of the finest Edinburgh Crystal, and placed in a prepared cavity of the foundation stone:

- A copy of *"Wallace and his Times"* by James Paterson.
- *"The Life of Wallace"* published by Murray and Son.
- A complete copy of *"The Poetical Works of our immortal and National Bard, Robert Burns"*, published by Inglis & Gall.
- A copy of Sir Walter Scott's *"Lady of the Lake"*.
- A copy of the British and Masonic Calendar for the year 1861, compiled by Donald Campbell, Esq.
- *"The National Wallace Monument - The site and the design"* by Dr. Rogers, prominent citizen of Stirling whose zealous activities as a founder member of the committee set up for the raising of the necessary funds and the erection of the Monument was perhaps rather belatedly acknowledged when a marble bust of him was unveiled on 9th August, 1892. The bust was unveiled by Sir John Stirling Maxwell and it was appropriately placed within the entrance hall.

- Inscriptions on vellum.
- Circulars and programme.
- A list of the names of the Wallace Committee and members of Stirling Town Council.
- A copy of the poem on the occasion of the ceremonial by Mr. James McFarlane. The poem, which won first prize in open competition, was entitled *"The Battle of Stirling Bridge"* and was sung at the banquet which followed the festivities.
- Various coins in gold, silver and bronze and metal.
- The New Testament.

The mood of the occasion was captured through the sentiments expressed in the last lines of James McFarlane's poem:

**"Though years like shadows fall
O'er the dial of stones of time,
Thy pulse o'freedom still shall beat
With the throb of manhood's prime,
Still shall they valour, love and truth
That shone on Scotland's early youth,
From Scotland ne'er dis sever
The Shamrock, The Rose, The Thistle stern
Shall wave around her Wallace cairn
And bless the brave for ever."**

(*) The Blue Blanket was the banner of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Stirling, said to have been granted by Mary Queen of Scots. The Banner was carried aloft in procession with a banner bearer at each corner, and tradesmen walked under it. It was sometimes pinned to the ceiling of the room where the Incorporated Trades met, or held by four men standing on chairs. It is made of strips of cloth in the form of a large Saltire and is now too fragile to display. (It is kept by The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum).

(#) The Stirling Jug is one of the treasured artefacts in The Smith Art Gallery and Museum's collection. It is a Scottish liquid measurement established by Act of Parliament in 1457, and awarded to Stirling as the centre of a brewing area. The Jug was made at Edinburgh Castle in 1508-1510, in bronze, in three parts, and holds just over three liquid pints (or 1.7 litres). The Stirling Jug has always been a symbol of municipal and civic identity, and was carried in the various Wallace Monument processions in the 19th Century.