

LEGLEN WOOD



A Presentation to The Calgary Burns Club – February 8, 2010

By Colin Pinkerton

The Wallace and Burns
Monument at Leglen
Wood



Wallace and Leglen Wood

- In December of 1291 William Wallace got into a dispute in Dundee and killed a young arrogant Englishman called Selby and made his escape to Kilspindie.
- The English authorities were now hunting for Wallace and branded him an outlaw.
- Therefore Wallace together with his mother and younger brother departed Kilspindie for Ellerslie.

Wallace and Leglen Wood

- Having reached Ellerslie, Wallace's uncle, Sir Reginald de Crauford, the Sherriff of Ayr advised him that it's safer to stay at Riccarton with another uncle, Sir Richard Wallace.
- Wallace took his uncle's advice and stayed at Riccarton from February 1292.

Wallace and Leglen Wood

- On 23 April 1292, Wallace encountered five English soldiers of the Ayr garrison while fishing at Irvine Water.
- The soldiers wanted his catch and a fight broke out. Wallace killed two, injured another and the others fled on foot.
- On his return to Riccarton his uncle was angered by another of his nephew's incursions against the English.

Wallace and Leglen Wood

- Out of concern for his safety his uncle sent him into the care of another relative, Wallace of Auchincruive and he concealed William Wallace in Leglen Wood until the situation cooled down.
- In November 1292 John Balliol swore an oath of allegiance to King Edward I as his Lord Paramount and was crowned King of Scotland on the Stone of Destiny, at Scone.

Wallace and Leglen Wood

- Meanwhile Wallace was bored after lulling about Leglen Wood and decided to visit the nearby market town of Ayr in disguise.
- Wallace encountered a large burly Englishman, which for one groat (a sliver coin worth four old pence) dared anybody to strike him with a pole he was carrying.
- Wallace could not resist the temptation and offered three groats for the privilege.

Wallace and Leglen Wood

- Wallace wacked the oaf so hard that it sent him sprawling across the street and broke the oaf's back in the process.
- This single act of defiance by Wallace would have sent the oppressed locals into an uproar. On hearing of this incident a patrolling group of English solders made for Wallace.
- After the English soldiers were dispatched Wallace escaped back to Leglen Wood.

Burns and Leglen Wood

- Leglen Wood, was said by Blind Harry in his poem on Wallace to be a favorite hiding place of the Scottish patriot. Burns came under the influence of this poem in Hamilton of Gilbertfield's abridged arrangement of the original book, in which we are told Wallace would go:

“Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late
To make a silent and a safe retreat.”

Burns and Leglen Wood

- Some years after reading this book Burns wrote:

“The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there til the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest.”

Burns and Leglen Wood

- Writing to Mrs. Dunlop from Mossgiel on 15th November 1786, Burns described his youthful pilgrimage to the spot:
‘I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day of the week in my power, and walked the half dozen of miles to pay my respects to the “Leglen Wood”, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loreto;

Burns and Leglen Wood

and as I explored every den and dell
where I could suppose my heroic
Countryman to have sheltered, I recollect
(for even then I was a Rhymer) that my
heart glowed with a wish to be able to
make a song on him equal to his merits.'

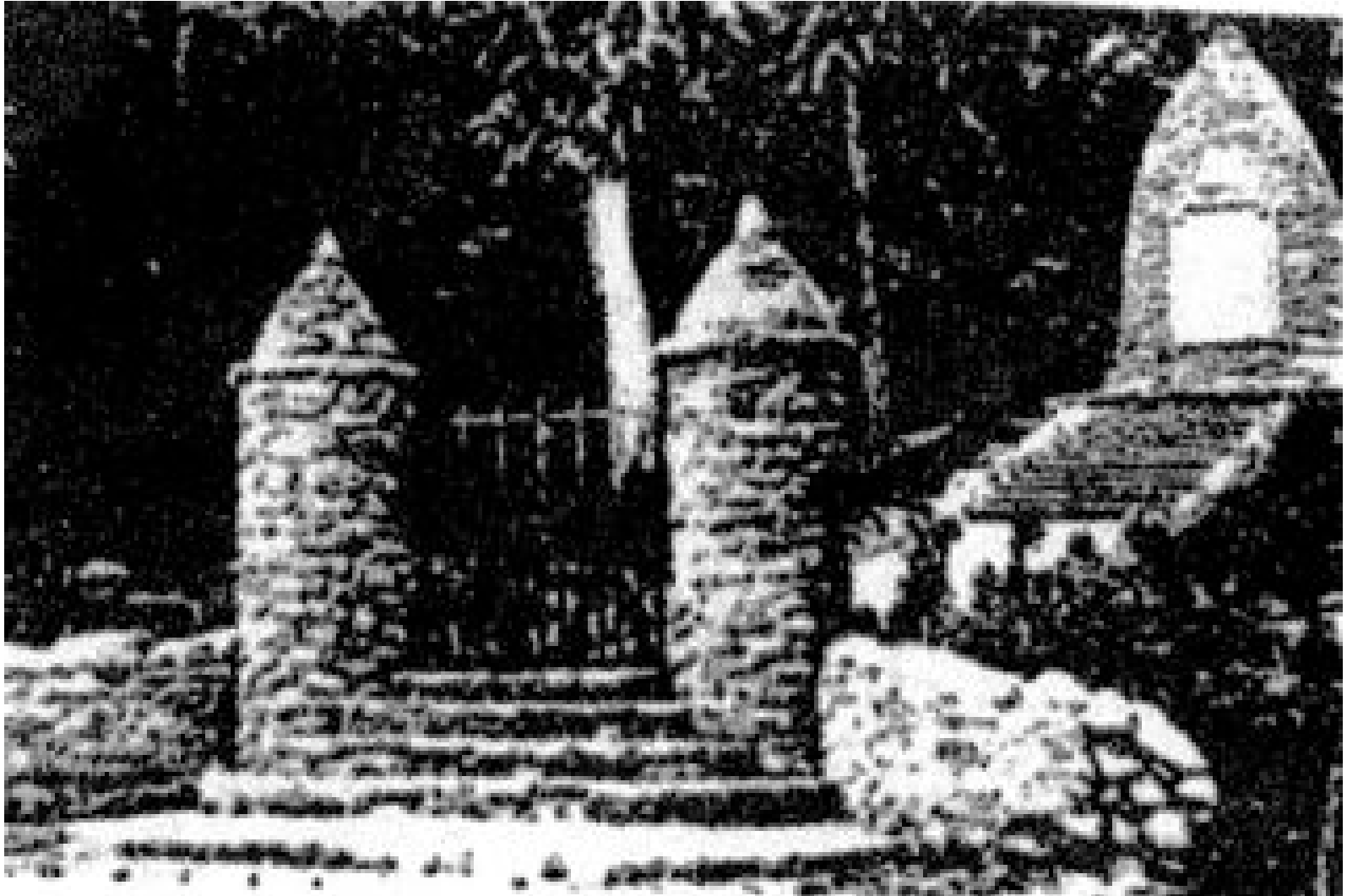
Burns and Leglen Wood

- Burns never managed to do this, although the lyrics he wrote to “Scots Wha Hae” on Bruce and Bannockburn are as stirring as any he might have written on Wallace.

Burns and Leglen Wood

- Burns described Wallace as “...The immortal Preserver of Scottish Independence.”
- In 1707 Scottish Independence was given away. Years later Burns wrote his immortal epithet:- “A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation.”
- I would now like to ask Bill Robinson to give us this Burns poem.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood – 1929



The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood

- In 1920 Mr. John M. Hannah acquired about ½ acre of woodland from Auchincruive Estate
- In 1929 the Burns Federation built the Cairn to Wallace and Burns with an entrance path of steps running up from the road.
- The Monument was dedicated on September 14, 1929.
- In 1933 John Hannah gifted the wooded area to the Burns Federation.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood

- The monument is reported to be made of Ailsa Craig granite boulders or of boulders from the River Ayr on whose banks it stands.
- The monument is about 16 feet high and I would estimate about 8 feet square at the base.

WALLACE
AND
BURDS

O NEVER, NEVER,
SCOTIAS REALM DESERT,
BUT STILL THE PATRIOT,
AND THE PATRIOT BARD,
IN BRIGHT SUCCESSION RAISE
HER ORDAINED AND GUARD.

The monument is inscribed:

Wallace

and

Burns

O NEVER, NEVER

SCOTIA'S REALM DESERT

BUT STILL THE PATRIOT

AND THE PATRIOT BARD

IN BRIGHT SUCCESSION RAISE

HER ORNAMENT AND GUARD

SYDNEY COCHETTER HOOKER HAD THIS CHAIR
TO MAKE A SURETY AND SAFE RECORD

THIS MEMORIAL WAS ERECTED BY
THE BIRDS FEDERATION
SEPTEMBER 1926

THE SKETCH WAS GIVEN BY
MR JOHN D. HARRIS
CURVED DIALS

THE COST OF THIS CHAIR WAS DEPAID BY
REV. J. C. HIGGINS, B.D.
DIPLOMA OF CAROLINE PARISH

On the other side of the monument is:

*“Syne to the Leglen Wood when it was late
To make a silent and safe retreat.”*

*This memorial was erected by
The Burns Federation, September 1929.*

*The site was gifted by
Mr John M Hannah, Girvan Mains.*

*The cost of the cairn was defrayed by
Rev J C Higgins, BD
Minister of Tarbolton Parish*

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood

- We do not know very much about John Hannah other than he was a member of the Ayr Burns Club.
- On the other hand we do know a little bit more about Rev. J C Higgins.

Rev J C Higgins

- Rev. James Craig Higgins was the minister of Tarbolton Parish Church for 47 years.
- He was President of the Ayr Burns Club.
- He wrote a biography of Burns, “Life of Robert Burns” which was published in January 1893.
- He also wrote a paper for “Burns Clarinda” which was published in 1897.
- He died in November 28, 1930 in his 75th year.

This is a photo of
Tarbolton Parish
Church as it is
today



Rev. J C Higgins

- Higgins Grave in the Tarbolton Parish Church yard.



The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood

- Now we move forward to January 6, 2007.
- There were very high winds that night and a 300 year old tree was brought down damaging the monument.





Shirley Bell, John and Margaret Skilling and granddaughter Charley pictured during an inspection of the damage at Leglen. Overleaf Shirley, John and Charley trying to get out through the maze of broken branches around the Cairn.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood

- The Robert Burns World Federation commenced an immediate campaign to raise funds to remove the fallen tree, and another tree that was about to fall over, repair the monument and to do a general clean up of the area.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood and the Calgary Burns Club

- This brings us to 2008 and The Club was looking for a project for the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Robert Burns in 2009.
- Past President, Ian Denness contacted Shirley Bell at the World Federation and it was determined that a new gate and the planting of a new tree was required for Leglen Wood.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood and the Calgary Burns Club

- The Club agree to fund the new gate and a new tree for Leglen Wood.
- On Thursday, August 20th the Burns Club Singers, representing The Calgary Burns Club were invited to attend the dedication of the new gate and the planting of the new tree.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood and the Calgary Burns Club

- The day started with a coffee morning at Oswald Hall hosted by the World Federation



President Jim Hutchens, World Federation President, Bill Dawson, Ron Pratt and Shirley Bell, Chief Executive World Federation, with Trevor Ramage in the foreground.







**“The Long and The Short Of It” (John Goldie and Jim Hutchens with Jim Hope-Ross in the foreground
On our brief walk from Oswald Hall to Leglen Wood.**



Jim and Bill dedicating the new gate.

Excerpts from Jim Hutchens Speech at the Dedication of the New Gate at Leglen Wood

I was once asked what it meant to be Scottish. The answer lies at Leglen Wood where the path of Wallace and Burns would cross. These two great Scottish patriots espoused freedom. Not necessarily Freedom of Scotland as a nation, but rather freedom of Scots as a people, freedom of heart, of soul, of mind, of thought and of speech and the freedom to fulfill our potential. This is what I feel is what it means to be Scottish....

Excerpts from Jim Hutchens Speech at the Dedication of the New Gate at Leglen Wood

These very ideals would encourage us to emigrate from our homeland in search of a new life in Canada, a nation which promotes those same values.

It gives me great pleasure to dedicate the New Gate to Leglen wood in the name of The Calgary Burns Club and Scottish expatriates from around the world. May this site remind all those who visit this site of what we all value above everything else, that most basic of human rights.

FREEDOM.



Joining Bill and Jim at the gate is Stephanie Young, Provost, - East Ayrshire.




The CBC Singers – “The Star of
Rabbie Burns”



First Vice President, Tony Grace placing a single red rose on the monument



Planting the new tree



Gate donated by
Calgary Burns Club
to commemorate the
250th Anniversary of the
Bard's Birth.

The Wallace and Burns Monument at Leglen Wood and the Calgary Burns Club

- The Calgary Burns Club are now part of the history of Leglen Wood and the Wallace and Burns Monument in our own small way.
- I know that when our President, Jim Hutchens spoke and the gate was dedicated I was very proud to be a member of our Club.

