

0. VICTORY AT STIRLING BRIDGE - Story Preface

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Outnumbered, Wallace and his men defeat King Edward's forces and take over Stirling Castle, the most important fortress in Scotland. This interpretation, by an unnamed artist from the Victorian Era, depicts the collapse of the wooden bridge. This tells us that the artist was influenced by the 15th-century poetic account of the battle by a bard known as "Blind Harry" (also known as "Henry the Minstrel").

By September 11th, Wallace heard that an English army led by the Earl of Surrey was advancing north. The armies met at the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, in Stirling, where Wallace's uncle taught him the poem about freedom. The Scots were outnumbered but refused to stand down. They wanted to show the English: Scotland was free.

Cambuskenneth Abbey is near the River Forth (of Firth of Forth fame). Stirling Bridge was the only way across the river. Abbey Craig, a nearby hill, provided a great place for Wallace and most of his men to camp and watch the oncoming English. It also provided him with the critical vantage point he needed to give orders to his men who were on the other side of the bridge.

Most of the English were also across the river, around the great fortress of Stirling Castle. All that separated them from Wallace and his men was the narrow, wooden Stirling Bridge. Refusing to listen to the advice of Earl Surrey, who told him to stay off the bridge, Cressingham led his contingent of English soldiers across it. He wanted to wipe out Wallace and his men.

Wallace, however, outsmarted Cressingham. Using a prearranged signal, he ordered his strategically placed men to destroy the bridge. The English forces were divided in two. English soldiers on the bridge were trapped.

Not only did the strategy work, the psychological benefit was greater than Wallace could have imagined. The men who remained with Surrey saw their fellow soldiers getting slaughtered. They panicked and ran back to the English border.

Stirling, the place where Scottish Highlands and Lowlands come together to form the best strategic location in the region, was now in the hands of the Scots. So was Stirling Castle, the most important fortress in Scotland.

Earl Cressingham, Edward's tax collector, died in the battle. Legend has it that Wallace and his compatriots sliced the portly treasurer's body into strips. William Wallace, it is said, used some of the strips to make a sheath for his dagger.

When King Edward heard about the stunning defeat of his overpowering forces at Stirling Bridge, he realized that Scotland was not Wales. Next time, Edward would lead the battle himself.

High on his list of objectives was the capture of William Wallace.

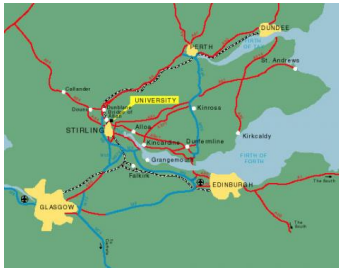
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/VICTORY-AT-STIRLING-BRIDGE-Braveheart)

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/VICTORY-AT-STIRLING-BRIDGE-Braveheart>

## Media Stream



### Stirling - Map Locator

Map image online, courtesy [University of Stirling](#).

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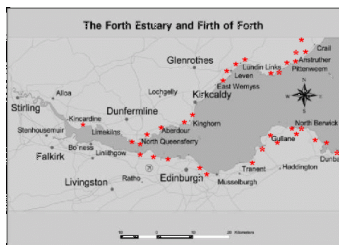


### Cambuskenneth Abbey

Image online, courtesy [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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### River Forth Estuary and the Firth of Forth - Map

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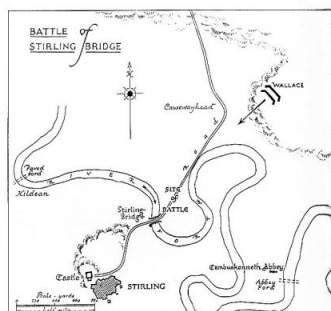
### Abbey Craig

Photo of Abbey Craig by Janfrie 1988, online courtesy [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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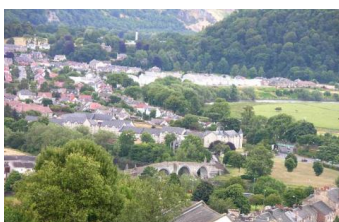
### Battle of Stirling Bridge



### The Battle of Stirling Bridge - Map

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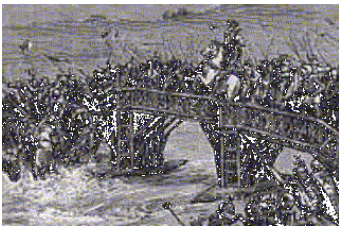
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### Battle of Stirling Bridge - Area View

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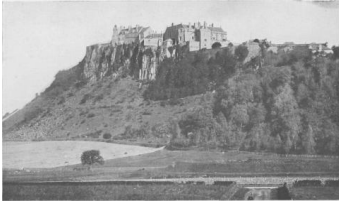


### Stirling Bridge

Illustration of the Battle at Stirling Bridge, included in *Cassell's Illustrated Universal History*, by Edward Ollier, published in 1890. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Stirling Castle

Image, described above, online courtesy Project Gutenberg.

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### Stirling Castle - The Most Important Fortress in Scotland

Photo by Matthew Perry; [online](#), courtesy Matthew Perry.

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