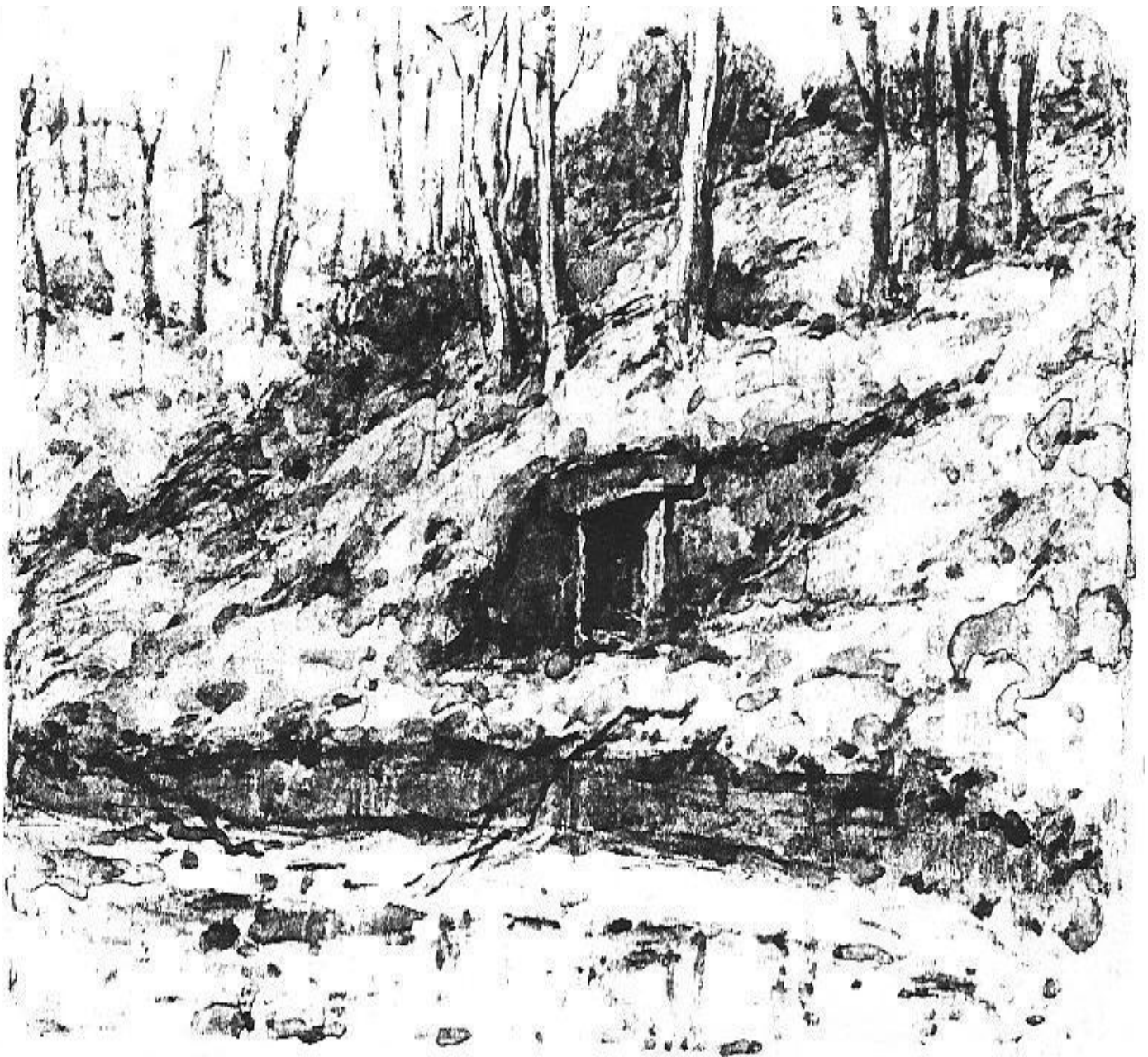


WALLACE'S WELL - PITTENCRIEFF GLEN

Dunfermline Historical Idylls
by
J.B.MACKIE





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Wallace possibly visited Dunfermline on two occasions; first, after his fatal encounter with young Selby in Dundee, when he and his mother were making their way to the Elderslie home, and in the disguise of pilgrims paid homage at the Shrine of St. Margaret, and second, when his mother, fleeing from Elderslie, repaired once again to the Shrine in hope of protection from her enemies. In one of the numbers of "*Dunfermline Men of Mark*" the Dunfermline claim to personal connection with the popular national hero is thus discussed –

"The actual evidence of Wallace's dealings with Dunfermline may be divided into two classes, and first must come the persistent local tradition. In Pittencrieff Glen is found a "Wallace Spa," about 200 yards south to the ruins of Malcolm Canmore's Tower. Now, as Dr. Henderson points out, this may have been originally Well of Spa, which changed to Wallace Spa by a trick in pronunciation – Well o' Spa – and in this case the story that the fugitive stopped to drink here would be merely a late invention to account for the name. But if, on the other hand, it is shown that Wallace really was in the locality, it will be fair to adduce that legend and the name as corroborative evidence; for the Glen was, and is, thickly wooded, and would afford a very safe retreat.

"The story that the hero lay hid in a cave which recent excavations discovered, cannot be regarded as evidence at all, though it was used as a hiding-place appeared clearly in the obvious traces of the fire. Needless to say, however, local opinion has at once dubbed the spot "*The Wallace Cave.*" Henderson whom we have already quoted, mentions that Arnold Blair, a monk, from the Benedictine foundation at Dunfermline, became Wallace's chaplain, and after his patron's death returned to the Monastery, where he wrote a life of the hero."

The full title of this is "*Relationes quaedam Arnaldi Blair, Monachi de Dunfermelem, et Capellani D. Willielmi Wallas Militis,*" and is supposed to have been completed in 1327. These "relations" were first printed in Sir Robert Sibbald's `De Gestis . . . Gulielmi Vallae, Scotiae olim custodies, Collectanea varia *1705), and again in the `Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace (1758), in which book they occur as eight pages of appendix to Blind Harry's work. The veracity of this short life has been questioned by some, because of its close similarity to Fordun's *Scottichronicon*,` but Mr. Erskine Beveridge, who has discussed the matter fully in his `Bibliography of Works Relating to Dunfermline,` cites Blind Harry himself as admitting that he derived his information from a Latin version of Blair, and inclines to the belief that Fordun simply followed Blair. The account of Wallace in the `Scottichronicon` is very meagre, as is we well known – it confines itself to a mention of the hero's origin and death, with short notices of Stirling Bridge and Falkirk – and this leads us to the supposition that the extant version of Blair's work, which is admittedly very similar, does little to throw light on Wallace's later years. All that can be said is that a Blair of Dunfermline certainly became chaplain to the patriot chief, and certainly wrote a history which survives, probably in Blind Harry's story, and which may or may not be the one remaining at the present day.

Another story quoted by Dr. Henderson runs to the effect that Wallace, while hiding in the forest debated with his friends the propriety of surrendering himself on honourable terms, and Chalmers, mentioning this, states that Edward angrily refused and set a price upon his head, whereupon our hero "betook himself again to the wilds, and the mountains and subsisted upon plunder."

Such then, is the local belief with regard to Wallace's connections with Dunfermline. Individually each portion may be open to considerable doubt, but the persistence of the story gives it value, and when, as will be shown, documentary evidence of a kind is also forthcoming, the cumulative effect is to produce a story worthy of credence, at all events, until it is definitely disproved.

The old poetical historians of our native land mention without a doubt that Wallace lay hid in Fife, where he carried on a sort of guerrilla warfare, and, according to Blind Harry, a chronicler, whose worth is increasing in estimation as fresh documents are

found, achieved considerable success in capturing Cupar, Kinghorn, and the island and castle in Loch Leven, so that

“The Scottis at large through Fife they rang

Off Inglismen nayne left in that countrie.”

But much more definite information than this is forthcoming. We are told of a pretended pilgrimage made by the hero and his mother to the Shrine of St. Margaret, the Patron Saint of Dunfermline:

The two went on their way, his mother telling inquisitive people that “*To Sanct Margaret thai socht quha servit, her,*” and came to Dunfermline, where they stayed one night, though, according to this account the journey was continued next morning. Elsewhere mention is made of the fact that the fugitive sought refuge in the woods round Dunfermline:

According, therefore, to the only documentary evidence of this period, Wallace occupied the woods of Fifeshire during some period of his long concealment.

Indeed, the story is reasonable enough, and the thorn in Dunfermline Churchyard may well mark the spot where the noblest of Scotland’s heroes buried his well-loved mother, especially since it appears that Arnold Blair certainly belonged to the old Benedictine foundation, whose ruins still remain. The mighty Bruce himself sleeps in the neighbouring Abbey, and there, too, rest Malcolm Canmore and his saintly Queen Margaret. In the Abbey itself there is a magnificent window at the west end of the Nave, on which Sir Noel Paton has represented the four characters of whom the city is most proud, the warrior Malcolm Margaret the Saint, Bruce trampling the Red Comyn, and Wallace with his broadsword defending fallen Liberty. While outside in God’s acre stands the symbol of the final devotion of Wallace, preserved almost as miraculously throughout the generations as the Missal of Queen Margaret.



Thorn Tree in

Dunfermline Abbey Churchyard.

“We love the memory of the lowly maid
Who gives her life her suffering sire to aid?
We love to see the manly stalwart son,
Down whose brave cheeks the burning dewdrops run;
While o’er his mother’s grave in grief he bends,
Himself meanwhile the stay of another friends,
Well, such was Wallace – the renowned, the brave,
In final sorrow at his mother’s grave.
Yet, Wallace wept, with manly grief while he
Planted his monumental `hawthorn tree`”

“Long has it stood since planted by his hand,
Long may it still in beauteous blossom stand!
And were I rich, around it I would raise,
A gentle fence to shield it many days,
And draw the stranger to the sacred spot
Dear to each patriot, dear to every Scot ;
For every Scot that boasts his country free,
Should sacred keep the Wallace Hawthorn Tree.”

- Henry Syme.

Wallace’s crowning offence in the eyes of King Edward was his irreconcilability to English rule as an insufferable usurpation. Longshanks dreaded him as the representative and champion of an unsubduable national sentiment opposed to his ambitious statesmanship, which had for its aim the establishment of one sovereignty in the island, and this dread inspired a hatred that was Satanic in its fury. Whoso thinks such words are too strong, let him read the official record in which a wicked attempt was made to brand the hero of Scotland’s independence as a criminal of the deepest dye, and note the savagery which inspires the diction of the cruel sentence pronounced against him, when at last through the treachery of a fellow-countryman, who had been trusted as a familiar friend, he fell into the hands of the English Monarch :-

“That the said William for the manifest sedition that he practised against the Lord King himself, by feloniously contriving and acting with a view to his death and to the abasement and subversion of his crown and royal dignity, by opposing his liege lord in war to the death, be drawn from the

Palace of Westminster to the Tower of London, and from the Tower in Aldgate, and so through the midst of the City to the Elms :

“And that for the robberies, homicides, and felonies he committed in the realm of England and in the land of Scotland, he be there hanged, and afterwards taken down from the gallows :

And that, inasmuch as he was an outlaw, and was not afterwards restored to the peace of the Lord King, he be decollated and decapitated ;

And that thereafter, for the measureless turpitude of his deeds towards God and Holy Church in burning down churches, with the vessels and litters wherein and whereon the body of Christ and the bodies of saints and relics of these were placed, the heart, and liver, the lungs, and all the internal organs of William’s body, whence such perverted thoughts proceeded, be cast into the fire and burnt;

And further, that inasmuch as it was not only against the Lord King himself, but against the whole community of England and of Scotland, that he committed the aforesaid acts of sedition, spoliation, arson, and homicide, the body of the said William be cut up and divided into four parts ; and that the head, so cut off, be sent up on London Bridge, in the sight of such as pass by, whether by land or by water ; and that one quarter be hung on a gibbet at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, another quarter at Berwick, a third quarter at Stirling, and the fourth at St. Johnston, as a warning and a deterrent to all that pass by and behold them.”

Why is Scotland Presbyterian? The answer is found in the story of the Killing Time. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and the persecutions of the Covenanters, mistakenly conducted in the interests of Episcopacy, aroused in the pious Scottish mind an indomitable resolution never to submit to the rule of a Bishop – never to own in the spiritual domain any King, but Christ. Why is the name of Wallace inextinguishably cherished with the fondest affection in every Scottish heart? To no small extent because of the unutterable cruelty with which he was done to death, and the infamous attempt which was made to blacken his character in the enduring historical annals. Wallace was no traitor, for he never recognised the sovereignty of Edward; the authorities which proclaimed him an outlaw were in his eyes

unrighteous usurpers ; the vengeance he executed on the foes was regarded by his countrymen and by himself as a justifiable retribution ; and the charge that he was a reckless desecrator of the church and a religious iconoclast was the basest of slanders.

Very different is the verdict passed upon him by the succeeding generations of his countrymen from that pronounced against him in Westminster Hall. It proclaims him a patriotic hero without fear and without reproach, - a mighty warrior who in his passionate endeavours to right his country's wrongs and his own, never stained his soul with selfish ambition; who in the days of his national guardianship displayed a healing statesmanship worthy of a modern reformer, encouraged a commercial policy in harmony with the principles of Free Trade and International Amity, and pioneered *Pentente cordiale* with France ; who when he found his leadership was an offence to the nobles showed himself ready to resign his command, in the hope of promoting unity and mutual loyalty ; and who as a military leader called into exercise a device that has often won victory and fame for British arms. For had not one of the best English historians seen in the desperate rings formed at the battle of Falkirk, the foreshadowing of those glorious squares which won at Waterloo, and have been at all times the chief pride of British infantry? But grander far than his proof of military genius, and of his statesmanlike vision is the inspiration of his life-record, which accentuates the appreciation of Freedom as a noble thing, which identifies for the human race patriotism with the nobler virtues, and which leads Scotsmen in every land, gratefully and proudly, to appropriate as their own the prayer of Burns at the close of perhaps his finest poem :-

“O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream's thro' Wallace's undaunted heart ;
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
His friend inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never Scotia's realm desert :
But still the patriot and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!”

The Wallace Thorn in Dunfermline Churchyard



By Thomas Morrison

It stands within an old churchyard,
Beside an old church tower,
Where thousands sleeping `neath the sward,
Await Time's final hour.
'Twas said on earth long since by one
To Fame and Freedom dear,
A sacred tribute from a son
To mark a mother's bier.

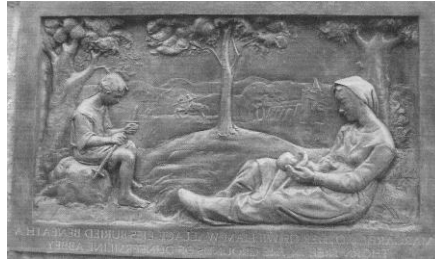
But since its fragile roots first spread
Their fibres in the clay,
Long changeful centuries have fled
On silent wing away.
But still it buds and blossoms here,
And tells where long ago
A hero shed the finial tear
On her who rests below.

Ah! Oft we gaze with thoughtful eye
Upon this grassy mound;
Oft scan yon airy turrets high,
With scroll and symbol crowned.
Their rests beneath them one whose name
Is known throughout each clime,
Whose memory fades not nor whose fame
Dims with the lapse of time.

But still more patriot-souled was he,
In battle not less brave,
Who, sorrowing set this hawthorn tree
Here on this nameless grave.
The feats achieved by Wallace wight
Our records proudly tell;
He fought and bled for Scotland's right,
He triumphed and he fell.

But now, when o'er his dust long years
Of centuries dim have rolled,
Than his no nobler name appears
On Fame's bright banner scrolled.
Ah, Wallace ! that sad scene of woe,
Those closing hours of thine
Still cheque the exulting tears which flow
At Bruce's sacred shrine.

THE WALLACE HAWTHORN TREE



Dear to the patriot is the sacred spot
Where Freedom's battles have been bravely fought;
Dear to his nation is the chieftain's name
Who fired their bosoms with heroic flame,
And led them on, a bleeding noble band,
To drive invaders from their native land.
Well, such was Wallace; and how can it be
We should forget "Wallace Hawthorn Tree!"

"We love the memory of the lowly maid
Who gives her life her suffering sire to aid?
We love to see the manly stalwart son,
Down whose brave cheeks the burning dew-drops run;
While o'er his mother's grave in grief he bends,
Himself, meanwhile, the stay of other friends.
Well, such was Wallace – the renowned, the brave-
In final sorrow at his mother's grave.
Yet, Wallace wept, with manly grief while he
Planted his monumental 'Hawthorn Tree.'"

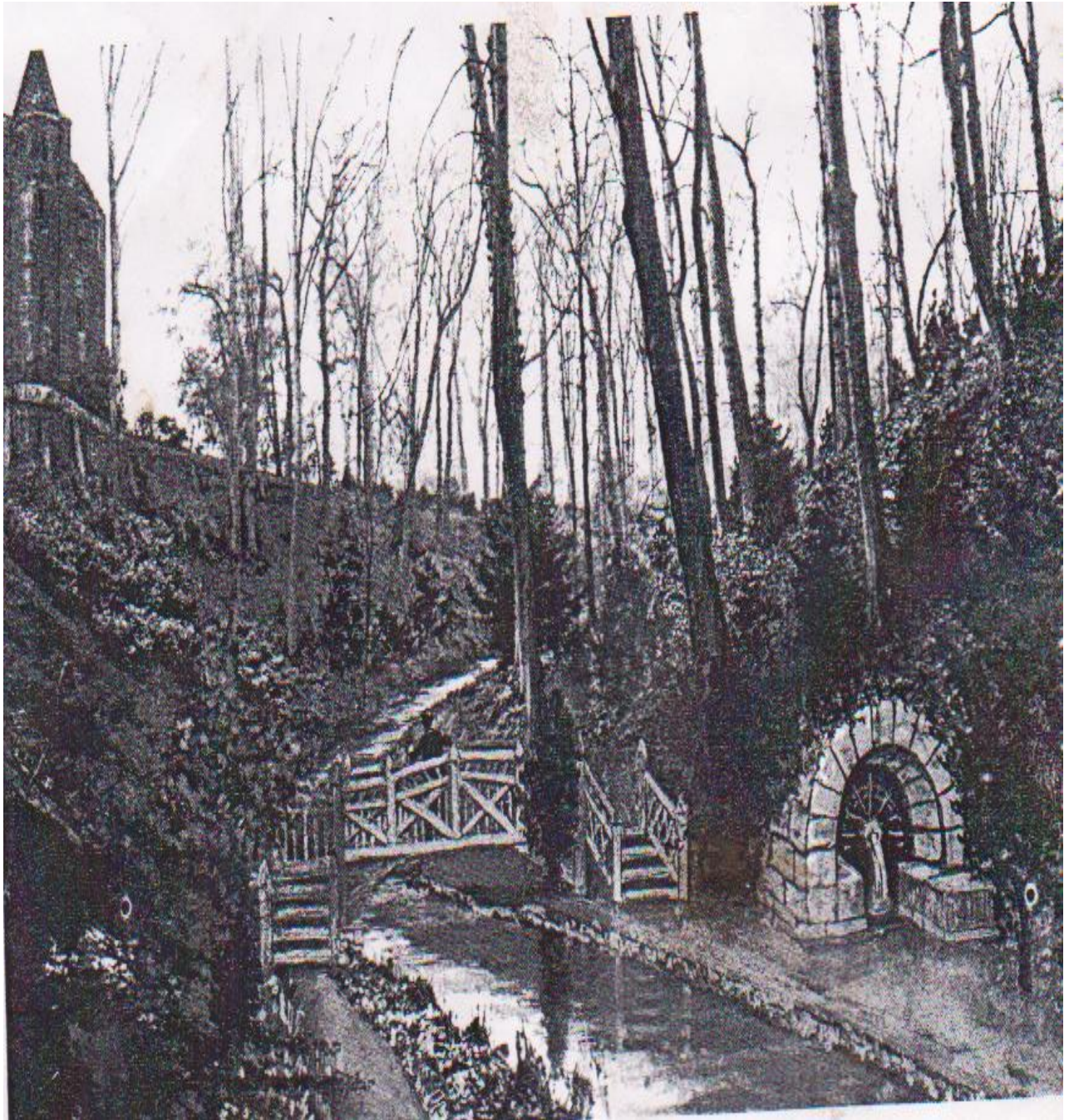
No costly ornamental pomp displayed
The secret where his mother's corpse was laid,
Lest the proud Southern, in their barbarous hands,
Should touch her dear remains with vengeful hands.
Thus in his wisdom and his love he sought
For his loved mother's grave a peaceful spot.
Come life or death to him, she safe might be
In peaceful rest beneath the "Hawthorn Tree."

Oh, Scotland! Scotland! bitter was thy grief,
When Wallace was betray'd – thy glorious chief.
Betray'd and murder'd and his body given
To feed the unoffending fowls of heaven.
Well had he done his native land to save-
Well had he done to shield his mother's grave-
Well had he done to break the invading host,
Ere by his treacherous friends his life was lost.
And well may Scotland proud of Wallace be,
And for his sake protect this "Hawthorn Tree."

"Long has it stood since planted by his hand,
Long may it still in beauteous blossom stand;
And were I rich, around it I would raise,
A gentle fence to shield it "many days,"
And draw the stranger to the sacred spot,
Dear to each patriot, dear to every Scot;
And every Scot that boasts his country free,
Should sacred keep the "Wallace Hawthorn Tree."

By Henry Syme.

PROPOSED FOR WALLACE WELL
by
PATRICK GEDDES



Wallace's Well simply rebuilt, and roughly suggested rustic footbridge, uniting old paths now renewed.