

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> CENTURY SCOTS –**

### **Troop types**

#### **Men-at-arms**

Men at arms followed the usual styles and chivalric culture of the rest of Western Europe. There is something of a wargames myth that their equipment was outdated but there is no real evidence for this. There is evidence that, due to the generally poorer state of Scotland, there were fewer men with full equipment than there might be in, say, France or England. French armour imports did improve the levels of equipment in the later 14<sup>th</sup>. Century and early 15<sup>th</sup>. Scots men-at-arms also faced a shortage of top quality horses. This said, their horses were probably no worse than those generally used by the English.

Although perfectly capable of mounted combat, Scots men-at-arms usually fought on foot. Typical weapon of the Scots man-at-arms on foot was the axe.

In addition to their own men-at-arms, Scots armies included foreign adventurers and mercenaries, especially Frenchmen. A significant force of French men-at-arms served in 1385.

#### **Infantry**

Robert the Bruce decreed in 1318 that there would be two infantry classes – armed men dressed in aketon, basinet and mailed gloves, armed with spear and sword and other men, with just a spear or bow. The description of the armed men closely matched English regulations for how hobilar were equipped, although no horse is mentioned in the Scots records. In addition to the spear and bow, axes are frequently mentioned as an infantry weapon. Clearly these are sometimes a side arm but on other occasions the long hafted weapon is meant.

Though the 1318 regulations only refer to the poorest class carrying bows, Bruce also enfeoffed archers who would be of a higher social class. Mounted archers are mentioned in the sources. Archers became increasingly important from the later 14<sup>th</sup>. Century, with archers being listed in retinues serving at home and abroad.

The French force in 1385 included a small body of crossbowmen.

#### **Highlanders**

Highland infantry tends to be overshadowed by a back-dated version of the highlander of the '45. There is little solid on the appearance and equipment of the poorer highlander in this period, the usual weapons being perhaps an axe or bow, with dagger as side arm. The better sort were, according to grave monuments, equipped with aketon, helmet, shield, spear or long hafted axe. The two handed sword would not be introduced till the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup>. Century, the usual sword being a hand and a half sword derived from the knightly sword of the 13<sup>th</sup>. Century and earlier.

The later highlander has given the impression of highland tactics being based on a wild charge. There isn't a great deal of evidence for this before the 17<sup>th</sup>. Century. Highland infantry could be aggressive – at Harlaw they are said to have charged like wild boars – but they could also engage in a stand up fight. The parallel with Irish Galloglas should be noted. Galloglas had originally come from

the Western Isles and there are clear parallels in appearance and equipment. Galloglas were also famed for the aggression but also for their stubbornness in defence – they frequently formed the rearguard during a retreat

### Scots in Free Company

Name	Mounted type	Dismounted type	Morale	Control
Men-at-arms	Knights	Men-at-arms	B	III
Lesser men-at-arms	Cavalry Superior	Polearms	B	III
French men-at-arms	Knights	Men-at-arms	A	III
Armed men	Cavalry	Spears or Polearms or Shot (longbows)	B or C	III
Spearmen	-	Spears	C	III
Archers	-	Skirmishers	C or D	III or IV
French crossbows	-	Shot (crossbow)	B	II
Highland warriors	-	Polearms or Ribalds	B	III
Highland clansmen	-	Ribalds	C	III
Highland archers		Skirmishers	C or D	III or IV
Armed servants		Levies	D	IV

### Army composition

Wargames' Scots armies are dominated by hordes of badly armoured spearmen. While this was often true of larger operations, raiding forces of several thousand well equipped mounted men were perfectly possible. Given the rules emphasis on smaller scale fights, this should be borne in mind.

The core of any force would be the men-at-arms, supported by mounted infantry. Beyond these would come the lighter armed men, often referred to as ribaulds in French language chronicles, who would include the common infantry, highlanders and probably the supporting servants (small folk)

Name	Up to 8 units	8 to 16 units	Comments
Men-at-arms	1-2	1-3	
Lesser men-at-arms	1-2	1-3	
French men-at-arms	0-1	0-2	May not outnumber Scots men-at-arms
Armed men (spear or polearm)	1-6	1-6	
Armed men (archers)	1-3	1-3	
Spearmen	0-4	3-12	
Archers	0-2	1-4	May not outnumber spearmen
French crossbows	0	0-1	Only if French men-at-arms present
Highland warriors	0-1	0-2	
Highland clansmen	0-4	0-8	Only if warriors present
Highland archers	0-2	0-4	May not outnumber clansmen
Armed servants	0-1	0-1	

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