



## **The Forest Laird: A Tale of William Wallace**

*Jack Whyte*

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In the pre-dawn hours of August 24, 1305 a.d., in London's Smithfield Prison, the outlaw William Wallace, who is to be executed at dawn, is visited by a Scottish priest who has come to hear his last Confession. So begins *The Forest Laird*, the first book in Jack Whyte's masterful new trilogy.

Wallace's story leads us through his many lives—as an outlaw and a fugitive, a hero and a patriot, a rebel and a kingmaker. He is the first heroic figure from the Scottish Wars of Independence brought blazingly to life in Jack Whyte's new trilogy, the Guardians, and will be followed by his two compatriots Robert the Bruce, King of Scots; and Sir James Douglas, known as The Black Douglas. Their exploits and escapades, desperate struggles and medieval savagery, high ideals and fierce patriotism are the stuff of legends, and the soul and substance of these epic novels.

## **The Forest Laird: A Tale of William Wallace Details**

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Author : Jack Whyte

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## From Reader Review The Forest Laird: A Tale of William Wallace for online ebook

### Sud666 says

Several months ago I had the grave misfortune of thinking "Outlander" by Diana Gabaldon was a good historical fiction/fanatsy. I didn't realize it was just soft-core porn (aka bodice-rippers) hiding behind a thin veneer of "historical accuracy". Eventually after fleeing the Scottish Highlands, chased by erect nipples and several raging phalluses, I fled to Jack Whyte's Guardian series and read about Robert the Bruce. It was excellent historical fiction and not a single purple-veined penis in sight.

"The Forest Laird" is actually the book that precedes "The Renegade". While the latter focuses on Robert the Bruce, this one is about William Wallace. It follows him from his youth all the way up to the death of his wife and family. It is wonderfully told and superbly done. Historically accurate and a great exciting tale.

One of the interesting things, mentioned by the author in the preface, is the fact that the Scotland of William Wallace is long gone. Walking through Scotland today is a vastly different situation from the Scotland of the late 1200's-early 1300's. Case in point is the ancient Selkirk forest. It covered the entire south eastern and most of the southern part of Scotland is almost completely gone, many of the abbeys and churches mentioned were often annihilated by King Edward I, not to mention 700 years of development have created a vastly different country than the divided Scotland of these times (divided by the Firth of Forth into a Northern and Southern Scotland).

Told through the eyes of Will's cousin, the Priest Jamie Wallace, it tells the story of murder and rape that started Will on his journey of hatred towards the English. It follows him through his Outlawry days in Selkirk Forest and covers his courtship and marriage to Mirren.

While the story is fun and exciting, there is a great deal of interesting background history-above and beyond the conflict between Edward and the Scots. We see the rise of the burgess class... a little historical background for you:

Until the 1300's the concept of a burgess class simply did not exist. But as Scottish merchants/freemen and traders clustered into the fortified burghs (for defense, often against Norse raiders) they began to do something that had not ever been done- they started forming guilds and trading associations. This led to them amassing wealth outside of the traditional feudal hierarchy. In time these burgess, bourgeois in French, would have a huge impact all over Europe. But we see their rise during this time. The interesting conversation between Father Jamie and the Bishop Wishart about this very thing is fascinating. Wishart was a very forward looking man, especially for a Churchman, and many of his ideas about the development of society were centuries ahead.

But this is a story about Wallace and his war against the English occupation of Scotland. Jack Whyte covers complex ideas and events in a way that makes it easy to read. It's never dull. I also give him credit in understanding the application of the English quarterstaff to the art of sword fighting, as well as his excellent knowledge about archery weapons of this time period.

A great and exciting read. If you are looking for a good book on the Scots and their struggles with England- this is a great place to start. An excellent series..and I promise, unlike Outlander, no nipples or purple-veined throbbing phalluses to worry about. This IS a real historical fiction. Well done Mr. Whyte!

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### **Andrea Paterson says**

This is a huge book, but I am thoroughly enjoying it. It's also helping to clarify why I was so disappointed in George R. R. Martin's equally huge volume, Game of Thrones. Both of these books are long. Both deal with wars and politics of an ancient realm and yet Jack Whyte weaves an emotionally charged story that moves along at a completely engrossing pace whereas Martin succeeded only in a plodding narrative with badly chosen points of description marring all the interesting parts. I read Jack Whyte's Arthurian books years ago and this book about the life of William Wallace is reminding me why I loved them so much. Great story, great characters, lots of action, and a good dose of history makes this a compelling read, and unlike Martin's book you won't get bogged down in descriptions of cloaks and footwear.

Whyte's William Wallace is very much alive and vibrant and I think he has achieved something noteworthy in being able to tell this tale effectively after the entire world has been exposed to Braveheart. Whyte gives us a William Wallace who is fallible, and completely human rather than the almost mythical man shown to us in Braveheart. Anyone with an interest in the Wallace story or in the history of Scotland will enjoy this book I'm sure. I'm about halfway through now and having trouble putting it down.

And an update--with 200 pages left to go I'm starting to struggle with this book. It's not holding my interest in the same way it was at first. This could have much to do with being 9 months pregnant though, so I'm not going to blame the book entirely. The problem I'm finding is that William Wallace himself is starting to disappear from the book as he goes off to fight the english and his cousin Jamie is left to tell the tale of the battles from afar, using second hand information in a lot of cases, and somehow it just isn't as captivating now.

And a final update: It picked up again in the last 60 pages.

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### **Chris F says**

For the first half of this book it was rating at 4 to 5 stars but the second half slowed up considerably, took way to long and ended in the middle of nowhere in particular. The other thing that spoilt the second half for me was the historically anachronistic ideas of patriotic nationalism and almost democratic ideas that the author puts in the mouths of some of his characters. That said the story is still good and the action well written, just too much thinking out loud between the examples of it.

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### **Karalee Coleman says**

I had really been looking forward to reading this novel. The first in Mr. Whyte's *Guardians of Scotland* trilogy, this is the story of William Wallace, an almost mythical figure who rose from obscurity to become a great warrior and leader of men in thirteenth century Scotland. Unfortunately, in order to understand what Wallace did and why he did it, it is necessary for the reader to see him in his historical context. The deterioration of the feudal system, the beginnings of the middle classes, the huge gulf between the rights and privileges of the nobles versus the peasants, the growing conflicts between Church and State, and the disputes between England and just about every other nation all contributed to the breakdown of society as it

had been known almost since the retreat of the Romans.

Novelists are told to “show me, don’t tell me”. I can’t think of a good way to *show* this changing environment. Sadly, Mr. Whyte doesn’t seem to be able to, either. While the first half of the novel is lively and colourful and brisk, as young Will Wallace grows to manhood and develops his skills and his worldview, the second half often seems to be a series of talking heads glued together with rambles through the woods and occasional violence. The endless recitation of dates, names and places reminds me of the way history was taught when I went to school – badly. Mr. Whyte’s research must have been extensive, and his grasp of overriding historical events is impressive. The story, which seems to incorporate characters and events from the Robin Hood cycle, should have been as thrilling as one of Sir Walter Scott’s romances while still teaching us about Scottish heritage. It wasn’t.

I was disappointed.

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### Laura says

**The people of Scotland were that way (innocent of war) in the springtime of the year of our Lord 1296. They heard the talk of war with England and they knew that matters had been set in motion that were beyond their control, grave matters that would affect them and change the very way their land was governed. And yet they did not grow unduly alarmed. An entire generation and come to middle age without ever knowing the dangers, the risks, or the enormous tragedy of extensive warfare, and the men whose duty it would now become to fight this new war and confront the English approached the task with a wide-eyed confidence that reflected their innocence and ignorance. That innocence was about to be rudely shattered.**

Jack Whyte was raised in Scotland, before moving to Canada. He states in the preface that he wrote *The Forest Laird* in an attempt to separate the real Scottish hero William Wallace from the mythical legend (epitomized in the movie **Braveheart**). Many negative ratings are based on readers expecting to experience a sweeping war saga. What we get instead is a look into Wallace's earlier life (pre-Braveheart if you will). It is clearly evident that Whyte researched his subject matter well, and also evident that he grounded his fictional story in real historical context (albeit perhaps getting a few details wrong here and there as other reviewers pointed out). When an author puts obvious time and dedication into their offering, I feel bad giving less than 3 stars...but \*this book felt too much like a detailed backstory to further books, hence the 2.5 stars\*.

The prologue begins dramatically with a 11th hour meeting between William Wallace and his cousin Jamie (in the disguise of an English priest). Wallace is to be executed the next day, August 24th, 1305 for daring to rebel against the English king. Jamie is there to provide comfort to his cousin. Wallace asks him to bear witness to his execution the following day, and the experience moves Jamie, AKA Brother James, to record the **Man** William Wallace who lived within the legends and tall tales which grew around him. The recollection begins, in Chapter 1, with young boys (age 8 and 10) escaping from bond, and running from English pillagers who killed their family, raped the boys, and left them tied up.

Jamie/James as a first person POV storyteller works quite well during the first 1/3 or so of the book. The boys are growing up together, and we see William mature through the eyes of his slightly younger cousin. Jamie clearly idolizes Will, they view each other as brothers, and Will looks after and protects Jamie. They grow up though, as boys tend to do. James begins training as a monk preparing for priesthood, and Will

becomes an apprentice to Ewan the bow master. At this point the POV becomes problematic. We often view Will's activities from a distance, hear second-hand accounts of events, and the story feels more like recounted history instead of an immersive epic.

There's a lot of \*talking\* about action instead of \*showing\* action. In addition, as others have mentioned, Whyte achieved attention to historical detail at the expense of character development. With the exception of Will (and even here we are \*told\* more than \*shown\* his changing priorities), other characters fail to come to life. Finally, the book ends abruptly, shortly after a gut-wrenching series of events, and we are left with the choice of either foregoing closure or forking out money for the next book in the series.

Bottom line: Recommended only for those who love anything to do with Scottish history, its revolution, and William Wallace. For that type of reader, this book may be worth the plausible telling of Wallace's early years. Definitely look elsewhere if you want an edge-of-the-seat epic. Given 2.5 stars or a rating of "Above average".

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### **Mark Halse says**

I'm a Jack Whyte fan. THE CAMULOD CHRONICLES are one of my favorite series and I even enjoyed his TEMPLAR series though it was less popular. This book however was a bit of a disappointment.

I was excited to read the story of William Wallace however after the first half of the book The Wallace didn't appear much. The book follows his cousin Jamie who spends most of his time away from William and we learn about his adventures second hand. Not too cool.

Whyte's stories are usually dominated by long, drawn out philosophical discussions that are peppered with action, twists and turns. This is something I usually enjoy but this book needed more pepper. After The Wallace grows up each chapter is one discussion after the other which quickly got boring.

Not the BRAVEHEART book I was looking for.

NOT RECOMMENDED

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### **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Those whose knowledge of William Wallace begins and ends with Mel Gibson will be sadly disappointed with Jack Whyte's The Forest Laird. This is not the over dramatized Hollywood hero we all remember from the 1995 blockbuster. Whyte's Wallace has no bells or whistles. His story is that of a man who happened to stand up at a most opportune moment in Scottish history. Nothing more.

I think it is safe to say Whyte's depiction is closer to the truth than Randall Wallace's screenplay, but that's not difficult considering the film implies William, who died in 1305, fathered Edward III, who was born 1312. Did I forget to mention fans of the film would be disappointed? Sorry, I didn't mean to disillusion the masses. My point here is that it is important to remember we actually know very little about the historic William Wallace. Short of his military career and the weeks leading up to his death, the details of his life are

really anyone's guess. The Forest Laird is significantly more grounded than the traditional Wallace legends, but it is still very much a work of fiction and shouldn't be taken as anything more.

Despite having owned a number of Whyte's books for several years, this is actually the first I've taken time to sit down and read. I should be ashamed really, but I don't know that I'll be rushing to my bookshelves anytime soon. I like the story Whyte created but the text was often bogged down by explanations of political events of which I was already very familiar. I wouldn't go so far as to say these passages were boring, wordy is probably more accurate, but they definitely didn't hold my attention. Surprisingly, these overblown political diatribes aren't what stick out in my mind when reflecting on the novel. Though mildly annoying, they are necessary to the telling. It would be impossible to tell William's story without explaining the Scottish Wars for Independence and the events that led up to them. No, my three star rating came down the execution, pure and simple.

Whyte's narrative is told solely from the perspective of William's cousin Jamie Wallace. It works beautifully during the prologue and the early chapters of the book, but when the boys transition from awkward teens to young adults, they part company. William taking to the woods with his bow while Jamie dedicates his life to God and quiet study. Obviously this poses a problem as Jamie isn't witness to many of William's exploits. I think Whyte would have been better off alternating the narrative between Jamie, Mirren, and Ewan. I'm no author, but I found it difficult to remain interested in a character who was so often removed from the action and the protagonist of the story.

The execution left something to be desired, but despite its flaws I found I really appreciated Whyte's attempt at separating the man from the legend. I'm not screaming its praises from the rooftop, but it will be interesting to see what Whyte does with the rest of the Bravehearts Chronicles.

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### **Ana says**

Well, that happened. For no particular reason whatsoever. I don't hold passion for this kind of books, but apparently that's all I can get my hands on lately, other than university manuals. College doesn't leave much time for pleasure reading, does it now?

Entertaining as it could be, fast-paced but with a firm grounding in detail work on characters and settings, "Rebel" captures the reader very well in its first hundred pages or so. Afterwards, it seems to dilute to a mere stumbling story, only to regain force in its last 50, 60 pages. As long as you are capable of understanding that no book ever is perfect in terms of pacing, as liking a certain pace is a very subjective thing, you can get enough enjoyment out of this (or for that matter, any) reading.

What I did find as a note of originality (though that might not be the right word, but I can't find the proper one now) was the usage of Scottish accent on paper - so, dialogue written in a very similar manner to how it's orally presented. That added to the authenticity of the characters, enough so that you believed they were who they said they were, which is frankly what you look for, as a passionate reader.

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### **Krista Baetiong Tungol says**

Picture William Wallace as a brave, young patriot, who—in his final moment when he was being hanged,

drawn and quartered—never wavered in his idea of a free Scotland and died screaming “Freedom” to foreign domination. Picture him as a man of resolve, as a man of certainty: always passionate to the Scottish cause, and ever ready to give up his own life for his country. A perfect hero who is respected by his noble allies, and venerated by the common folk of his time and even people years ahead of his time.

You are actually looking at Mel Gibson, a la William Wallace, from his 1995 hit movie. In this book, though, Wallace’s depiction is nowhere near flawless. Before there was a brave William Wallace fighting and dying for freedom and Scotland, there was first a shy, clever, and observant young man named Will. Jamie Wallace, the story narrator and Will’s priest cousin, describes him as an ordinary man, who, before leading an extraordinary life, has harbored simple enough dreams and a thirst for a peaceful life. He relates how Will was as a boy, schooled in religion and foreign languages who loves his long bow and dreams of being a forester; a young man falling in love for the first time, passionate and devoted and resolute to win his beloved’s affection; an outlaw, where he has competently led and organized his throng of followers; and a dispassionate freedom fighter, who at first is ever cautious of dipping into his country’s political affairs as the important local magnates prove to be unsteady allies, until the sudden English occupation of Scotland and his own tragedy have drastically changed him and his willingness to rebel. Jamie remembers as well what makes Will happy, or excited, or sad; he shares his thoughts and worries, and paints his humanity in its true color so that everyone will see him as William, just the man.

This to me is a convincing tale of William Wallace before he became the *Wallace*; it is grippingly inventive, too, considering his life before the first Scottish Wars of Independence was barely documented. The depiction of his early life did not come out glossy and exalting, and while several pages detailing history became a bit of a yawn fest, I actually appreciated the author’s passion for reliving history, specifically the part where his characters discuss the impact of the emergence of middle class in a feudal society, the impression William Wallace left to the common people, and the reason for the magnates’ vacillating mood in joining the war against England. The author also impressively interspersed historical facts with the characters’ fictional yarns, and made the likes of Bishop Wishart, William Lamberton and Andrew Murray estimable Scotland’s champions in my eyes (and how I wished I had personally known people like them in this lifetime!)

Overall, *The Forest Laird* is a satisfying and refreshing tale of one of the most personified heroes in history, and a big leap to all the hero-worship sketches we have of him in both print and motion. My only regret is that I failed to see that this book is actually part of a trilogy, and I still don’t have books 2 and 3. :(

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## Derek says

Everything I've read says that this is a trilogy, and I'm having trouble figuring out how Whyte can wrap it up in three books.

This first volume follows William Wallace. The prologue begins with his execution, then we go back to see the life that led up to it. About as much is known about Wallace's early life as about Christ's, so Whyte has a lot of room to speculate, and he does it very well and believably.

Of course, there's a background history that is well-documented, though not much taught to us Sassenach's, so it was all pretty new to me, and interesting.

The frustrating part is that the story ends before any of the events that we probably all know from the movie *Braveheart*—which, of course, is also before the execution in the prologue—so what happens in the intervening years?

Still, I feel I know more, and with much more balance, than I knew before of Edward I's imperial ambitions in Scotland than I learned in school.

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### **Mercedes Rochelle says**

I remember Jack Whyte's Arthurian Skystone novels very fondly, so I thought I'd give William Wallace a try. As expected, Whyte's writing is very fluid and we get an earthy, rustic character easy to relate to. This novel covers the early part of Wallace's life, before he gets involved with the uncooperative nobles of Scotland. It is told after the fact, from the point of view of his cousin Jamie, a quieter, less impulsive lad who eventually became Wallace's resident priest for his forest hideaway. Jamie's recollections from the end of his life give him the opportunity to show Wallace's actions in the context of hindsight: "Over the decades between then and now, I have found it both ironic and tragic that Wallace is condemned as a base-born, ignoble brigand for the way in which he waged war and the methods that he used, while King Robert himself, who perfected those same methods in the two ensuing decades and carried them to unprecedented extremes both on and off the field of battle, is universally hailed as the Hero King." I thought this was an effective way to blend history into a historical novel; we haven't even met Robert the Bruce yet, but this observation helps put both him and Wallace into perspective.

Whyte has written this book after the movie "Braveheart", which he admits was a daunting prospect. I would imagine that most Americans, at least, never heard of William Wallace before the movie came out. So he had to carefully avoid looking like he was copying from the script while at the same time retaining the trappings of a familiar icon. I think he did this very well. We recognize Wallace from the start as larger than life and we're not the least bit surprised that he feels the need to champion the downtrodden.

Several times throughout the book I caught myself wondering whether I was reading about a Scottish Robin Hood; Wallace starts his career as an archer, he's in trouble with the authorities, he has his friar Tuck, so to speak. I imagine the parallels are more than coincidental; in the introduction Whyte tells us that nothing is known about Wallace's early years so "this tale speculates what might have been". That's fine; it's a good story and sets things up well. By the end of the book we are ready to get into the heart of his career.

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### **Holly P says**

This book starts out by introducing William Wallace and his cousin Jamie as small boys when their home is attacked by English soldiers who brutally murder the rest of the family. Jamie narrates the tale and we follow the two boys as they grow into young men under the care of their Uncle who takes them in after their traumatic ordeal. While the boys are close growing up, it becomes clear that their lives will take different paths as Jamie becomes more interested in the Church and scholarly pursuits and William in learning fighting techniques, weapons (particularly the English longbow) and learning the land as a Forrester. As the Scottish stand helplessly by while more and more English Soldiers invade their homes-raping, pillaging,

abusing the populace and accusing innocent citizens of being outlaws-William decides to take a stand which makes him hated and feared by the English.

Wallace is a figure that not a whole lot is known about (unless you count what you "learned" from watching Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*) and Jack Whyte breathes life into this character who is often raised to mythical proportions. I loved the author's idea of what William may have been like in his youth and also the realistic portrayal of this legendary figure. Wallace isn't some giant who threatens to take on all the English single-handedly. If you are looking for the in your face William Wallace that you get in the Gibson movie, that character doesn't exist here. Here he is a man who would have loved to live a peaceful life in the forest with his beloved wife Mirren but is instead pushed into reacting by the actions of the English. The manner in which he hampers the English (by taking to Selkirk forest and attacking them as they pass through) bears a bit of a resemblance to that other legendary hero-Robin Hood. The supporting characters including Jamie and Ewan who befriends the boys at an early age and becomes William's right hand man are well fleshed out and the history of medieval Scotland contained in the book is fascinating. The only area of contention for me was when the characters would discuss the political maneuverings of the Scottish King and his cabinet, King Edward's motivation and the struggles for the throne, it would get a bit tedious. I understand the necessity of including this so the reader would get a full picture of exactly what was happening in Scotland at the time but the level of detail presented in doing so made it a bit dull. Fortunately these passages were few and far between and other than these areas I found this book to be immensely enjoyable.

This book clocks in at over 500 pages and I was so engrossed I sped through it in no time. I loved this fresh take on the legendary William Wallace and I thought Jamie Wallace was a perfect medium through which to present William's story. I would also like to mention that this book is the first in a planned trilogy with the second book taking on the story of Robert the Bruce and the final book in the trilogy will revolve around Sir James Douglas (the Black Douglas). I can't wait to continue on with these two stories and I definitely recommend this one!

\*review copy from publisher\*

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### **Carol says**

Although Jack Whyte is my favorite author, this book was not one that was memorable. The story was a bit too religious and moved very slowly. I'm hoping that the next books in this series will be more to my liking.

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### **David S. says**

On August 24, 1305, a Scottish priest is admitted into London's Smithfield Prison, in order to hear a condemned man's final confession. But, Father James Wallace has heard it all before. He is in fact there only to comfort his cousin, William, as he awaits the dawn's early light and his moment with destiny. William is not afraid of dying, he is afraid that the motivation behind his treacherous acts will be forgotten. Father James can only assure that they will not.

Decades later, the legend of "The Wallace" has reached mythical status among the Scottish people, where most tales are exaggerated, while others are entirely forgotten. Father James will set the record straight. The record where Will Wallace was an expert with the English long bow - not the sword. And, a tale that exposes

a Will Wallace that is only a by-product of English maliciousness. But, mostly, Father James will recount, in great detail, the numerous loyal friendships that helped shape the orphaned lad into one of the Guardians of Scotland. And, how a lovely maiden, named Mirren Braidfoot, ignited a fire in this guardian's heart, before an unspeakable tragedy became the catalyst that set the country ablaze. James Wallace was an eye witness to it all, for before he was Father James, he was a brother-in-arms to The Forest Laird.

Canadian author, Jack Whyte, is known for bringing new life to the King Arthur legend, by blending historical facts with adventurous storytelling, in his "The Dream of Eagles" series. Now, with ***The Forest Laird*** (the first book of The Guardian Trilogy), Whyte leaves the Braveheart legend for the big screen and switches his focus to the man, William Wallace. All his tragic occurrences and personal triumphs, the reader bears witness to, as narrated through the eyes of Will's cousin, Father James. Unforgettable fictional characters share the page with important historical figures, such as: Lord Robert Bruce, King Edward I (Plantagenet) of England, King John (Balliol) of Scotland, and Bishop Bek of Durham.

This historical novel concentrates on the tensions, conflicts and politics between England and Scotland in the late 13th Century, following the unexpected death of Alexander III, King of Scots. By happenstance, William Wallace's life runs parallel to these events, until everything is reversed and the events seem to revolve around Wallace. Whyte's wordsmith skills propel him to the ranks of historical novelists Edward Rutherford (***Sarum***), and James Michener (***Chesapeake***), with his ability to reflect not only the geography and landscape of the Scottish countrysides and forests, but the snapshot in time, as well. Just as Leon Uris', ***Trinity***, gave testimony to the Irish's suffering at the hands of the English, Whyte's ***The Forest Laird***, gives credence and explanation to a similar revolution, by the Scottish people, hundreds of years earlier.

Jack Whyte's, ***The Forest Laird***, brings a reality tale to the Scottish legend of William Wallace. Prompting the reader to acknowledge that reality is stranger - and, more enjoyable - than fiction.

Recommend? You betcha.

4 character driven stars!

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### **Steven Peterson says**

The title of my version of this book is "Rebel," but it appears to be the same volume.

This is an interesting take on the life of William Wallace.

First, it is a novel--not a biography. But the author has used historical sources on Wallace to try to provide a context that makes sense. How accurate the context is I do not know; this is not a period of history and a place in history of which I am conversant.

Second, if you want to reprise the battle scenes from the movie "Braveheart," forget it. This novel examines Wallace's life--from childhood to adulthood--to the point where he becomes an avenging angel (or devil?) against the English under England's King Edward (nicknamed Longshanks).

Third, the tale is told through the eyes and ears of William Wallace's cousin, James (or Jamie when he was young) who becomes a priest. The novel traces Wallace's life from childhood, to his developing expertise as

a longbowman to his become attracted to and married to Mirren and his becoming a father with her child. The tale also speaks of his efforts early on to draw together Scots who were willing to sting the English "invaders" in Scotland. The books speaks of Wallace's tactical and strategic skills. The work also speaks to his desire to be a family man and not a military leader. But the increasingly intrusive English presence provides challenges to that desire. The book closes with incidents that push Wallace to give up his vow not to fight.

Fourth, in an interesting authorial play, the book begins at the ending, leading us to want to know how William Wallace came to be the force against the English that viewers of the movie came to know.

Overall, a nice work.

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