

The competitor

Robert V de Brus

c.1220-1295

The roots of Scotland's Wars of Independence are tangled and run deep. But among the key figures was Robert V de Brus, Lord of Annandale, and grandfather of *the* Robert the Bruce (King Robert I), who took the crown in 1306. While the grandson became famous for pushing English kings out of Scotland, it was the grandfather who had invited them in.

The throne had been left empty in 1290 by the death of Alexander III and his short-lived successor Margaret, the Maid of Norway.

The two main rivals to become the next king of Scots were Robert V de Brus and John Balliol.

Robert, and the Guardians of Scotland, urged Edward I of England to come north and assert his overlordship of Scotland – hoping that he would then be given kingship of the Scots.

And so began the Great Cause, in which a range of competitors put the arguments for why the throne should be theirs.

Balliol and de Brus were the only serious contenders.

In 1292, judgment was given in favour of John Balliol.

That should have been that, but Pandora's Box had been opened and the lid would not easily be shut.

Edward was not content to let the Scots run their own affairs.

Tensions built, leading to the Wars of Independence, which are often regarded as a struggle to throw off the English yoke, but had much to do with clashes between rival factions of Scots.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/3752.html>.