



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



MiniPresentation14

BATTLE OF KRINGEN/PRILLAR-GURI

Battle of Kringen/Prillar-Guri

August 26, 1612, gave a heroine to Norwegian folklore and brought notoriety to a member of the Scottish clan, Sinclair, at the Battle of Kringen in Gudbrandsdalen.

The conflict which led to the Battle of Kringen started the year before, in 1611, and was later named the Kalmar War. Sweden stood against the united kingdoms of Norway and Denmark.

A common way to raise an army at that time was to draft mercenaries, and the Swedish king drafted his troops in Scotland. These troops landed on the west coast of Norway. Half of them went ashore in Trøndelag and made it safely to Sweden, the other half landed in Romsdalen—and set out on the march that would become the last one for many of them.

The 300 soldiers chose the route up Romsdalen across the mountains to Gudbrandsdalen. The Norwegians were not much set on fighting a war that they felt was the Danish king's war, not theirs. But when the farmers of Gudbrandsdalen heard rumors of troops intruding on their native soil, the war became very much their own. Men grabbed guns, axes and spears, dug out their antiquated bows or armed themselves with iron rods and pitchforks.

Four to five hundred of them met at Kringen where the troops had to pass through on a narrow road with the wide Lågen river on one side and the steep hillside on the other. Up on the hill above, a huge pile of logs and rocks was built. Their strategy was to send this crude, but deadly weapon down the hill to crush the troops.

The stage was set—now enter the heroine of the day. She was a young girl from the farm, Kruke, named Guri. Her task was to stand on a small island in the river from where she could watch for the soldiers. When they appeared, she would blow her billy-goat's horn, or *prillar* horn as they called it, to warn the valley men. She was nicknamed Prillar-Guri after the horn-blowing, and people who go to Kringen can see her name on a monument placed close to the road which winds throughout the valley.

The unsuspecting troops marched right into the ambush. In a terrible moment, their ranks were broken; men were crushed by an avalanche of rocks and logs, or knocked into the river. Shots were fired and axes swung. The farmers were first and foremost out to get Captain George Sinclair, who was believed to be the commanding officer of the mercenaries. They killed him there at Kringen—and in their tales and folksongs he continued to be the dreaded enemy.

The surviving soldiers were locked in a barn for the night. The next day a bloodthirsty crowd demanded further revenge. Several of the Scots were dragged out of the barn and killed. When it was all over, only eighteen were left of the 300 who set out on the expedition. And the Norwegians seemed to be satisfied with their revenge—to the degree that they allowed two of the survivors to settle in the valley.

The legend of Prillar-Guri and Sinclair is still alive in Gudbrandsdalen. A roadside inn is named after Sinclair and inside, travelers can view pictures and antiques related to the battle.