



Collins *Little book of*

# Scottish History

*From Bannockburn to Holyrood*



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## Introduction



Compiling *Collins Little Book of Scottish History* has been a wonderful challenge. With thousands of years of history as source material there is an extraordinary wealth of information and facts to call on and so many famous – and not so famous – lives whose stories deserve to be told, from Neolithic times through to the digital age of the 21st century.

With *Collins Little Book of Scottish History* we have attempted to give as broad an overview as possible. Yes, we cover the more familiar topics of William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, Mary, Queen of Scots, Robert Burns, the battles of Bannockburn and Culloden, the Highland clans, and the historic role of Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland. However, we also recognize the equally important events that shaped Scotland into the country it is today: a nation that was forged first by the union of the Pict and Gaelic-speaking incomers from Ireland, and grew over time to incorporate the Lowland kingdom of Lothian and Strathclyde, and the formerly Scandinavian-ruled Hebrides and Northern Isles. In doing so we trace the development of a nation and people that were given the name ‘Caledonia’ by the Romans, then ‘Alba’ by the Gaels, before settling on ‘Scotland’, the land of the Scots.

The kingdom of Scotland endured for 700 years through adversity, conflict, and seemingly insurmountable odds until the Union of Crowns with England in 1603 and the Union of Parliaments in 1707. However, even after Union, the Scottish people have retained their independent culture, heritage, and spirit into the modern age, both at home and abroad. After 1707 itinerant Scots travelled the globe in ever-greater numbers, taking their language, their religion, and their history with them to their new homes. Over time this Scottish history, as history always does, became interwoven with mythology and legend to create a rich and colourful tapestry, so wherever possible we have tried to differentiate the fact from the myth – or explain why the legend became so important.

By giving due recognition to the history of Scotland and the Scots after 1707, we will also attempt to bring the story up to date. Scots played a pivotal role in the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire. In the process they not only built modern Scotland, but also an extraordinary amount of the modern world, from the telephone to television, and from radio waves to penicillin. Scotland’s ongoing scientific, industrial, and medical legacy is another chapter of the story that we will investigate, alongside such iconic aspects of the nation’s culture as tartan, whisky, and golf. For it is only by examining all elements of Scotland and the Scots that we gain a true picture of the country and its people.

History matters, for it tells us who we are, how we got here, and why the world is the way it is. And for a country such as Scotland, where the question of national identity can have many different and sometimes contradictory answers, history matters more than for most. The *Little Book of Scottish History* is our attempt to provide a concise summary of over 2000 years of Scottish history. We hope that it answers and explains all the questions you ever wanted to ask, as well as a few that you never even thought to. We also hope you enjoy *Collins Little Book of Scottish History* as an informative and entertaining introduction to a subject that has never had such a large global audience. For that is the most wonderful thing about history: there are always more stories to be told.



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## Prehistoric Scotland



Located on the western fringes of the European continent, Scotland was one of the last regions to be inhabited after the end of the last Ice Age. The first humans arrived over 9,000 years ago, around 7,000 BC, and were nomadic hunters and gatherers, but settled as farmers. The oldest surviving evidence of their Neolithic society is found at the village of Skara Brae in Orkney, which dates back 5,000 years to around 3,000 BC. Orkney is a treasure trove of reminders of prehistoric Scotland, with Skara Brae and the magnificent burial tomb of Maes Howe as its centrepiece. Further west, on the Hebridean island of Lewis, stands the equally impressive stone circle of Calanais (Callanish), which also dates back to the third millennium BC. It is highly probable that there are many other equally important artefacts of the first natives buried deep beneath the peat and earth of the islands of Scotland, but even from what has been found so far, we can tell that a sophisticated culture and widespread trading routes had been established thousands of years before the more recent reputation of the Scots as an ingenious and exceedingly well-travelled people.

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## The Romans



The first surviving record of the people who lived in the land that we now know as Scotland came in AD 79 when the all-conquering Romans arrived in Scotland under the general Agricola. In AD 84 Agricola defeated the Celtic tribes who lived in eastern and northern Scotland in a mighty battle in the Cairngorms – although we only have the Romans' word for how glorious this victory actually was. During the next century the Romans reinforced their position in their most northerly territory by building forts, garrisons, and, in AD 143, the Antonine Wall, which stretched from the River Forth in the east to the River Clyde in the west. The Romans gave the name 'Caledonia' to what is now Scotland. However, whether through choice or their inability to subdue the resistance of the local tribes they encountered, the Romans never succeeded in making Caledonia anything more than a military outpost. In AD 180 the Romans left Caledonia and retreated southwards to Hadrian's Wall, in what is now the north of England, never to return. The forts and the Antonine Wall were abandoned, and so ended the first attempt of many to unite the island of Britain under the rule of one empire.

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## The Picts



It was the Romans who gave the Celts who lived in Scotland the name of ‘Picts’, deriving from the Latin ‘Picti’, meaning ‘painted ones’, on account of the body paint they wore in battle. And it was the Romans, with their departure from Caledonia, who gave credence to the Picts’ historical reputation as a warrior people that even the world’s greatest empire could not subdue. Although little is known of the origins of the Picts and their relationship with the other Celtic peoples of Britain and Ireland, the name became associated with the tribes who lived in northern and eastern Scotland. In the centuries that followed the Roman departure in AD 180, the Picts eventually united to establish the kingdom of Pictland. The Picts remained a powerful presence until the 9th century AD, when the kingdoms of the Picts and their principal rivals, the Scots, were first united, but by the following century the Picts had been subsumed into a new Scottish nation and identity, leaving a cultural and political legacy of fierce independence that continued long after their disappearance from history.

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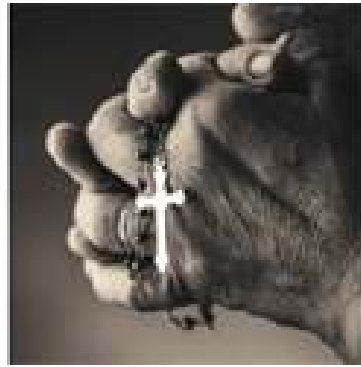
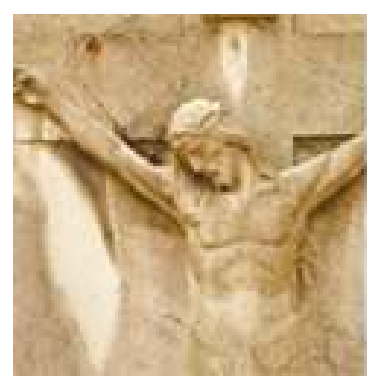
## The Scots



The people after whom Scotland is named were Celts from Ireland, who began to arrive in the west of Scotland in the 4th century AD. It is unclear where the name of 'Scots' came from. Suggestions include the Latin name 'Scoti', meaning 'raiders', although it is probable that there are earlier, unknown origins. These Irish invaders established themselves in what is now Argyll in their kingdom of Dalriada. When the kingdoms of the Picts and the Scots became united in the 9th century AD, it was the Scots who ultimately proved dominant and it was their culture and Gaelic language (deriving from 'Gaels', an ancient name for people of Irish origin) that dominated the new kingdom of Alba. It was not until the 11th century when the Lowland kingdoms of Lothian (in 1018) and Strathclyde (in 1034) finally fell under the rule of Alba. However, Gaelic never became established in Lothian and the southeast. Instead it was the Old English language of Lothian that increasingly gained precedence in the newly expanded nation, and over time the Gaelic name of Alba would be replaced by its English equivalent, Scotland, the land of the Scots.

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## Christianity



The first record of Christianity in Scotland dates back to AD 397 when St Ninian, a Christian missionary from the north of England, became Bishop of Whithorn in Galloway and built Scotland's first Christian church. While little is known of St Ninian and the first Christians, the site of the first church in Scotland, in Whithorn, which was given the name of *Candida Casa* (or 'the White House'), remained a centre of Christian pilgrimage for the next thousand years.

There also remains a widely held belief that St Ninian's near-contemporary, St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was actually born in Scotland, in Kilpatrick in Dunbartonshire. However, there is no historical evidence to substantiate this claim, and in all probability Patrick, like Ninian, hailed from what is now the north of England. Scotland instead had to look considerably further afield to find a national patron saint to call its own.

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## St Andrew



The patron saint of Scotland (and also Russia) is St Andrew, the brother of Peter and one of the original Twelve Disciples. According to legend, a relic pertaining to the apostle, who had been martyred through crucifixion on an X-shaped cross in Greece in the 1st century AD, was brought to Scotland at some time in the 8th century and buried in what became the historic town of St Andrews Fife. In the same century, it was said that, prior to a famous victory by the Picts over the Northumbrians at Athelstaneford in East Lothian, a vision appeared in the sky of an X-shaped white cross against the background of the blue sky, so beginning the cult of St Andrew as a symbol of first Pictish and subsequently Scottish national identity.

The blue-and-white diagonal cross became the Saltire, the national flag of Scotland, and the feast day of St Andrew, the 30th of November, became the national day of Scotland. St Andrew has remained the patron saint of Scotland to this day, although tradition also dictates that St Andrew's Day is celebrated by being almost completely ignored by most of the Scottish population.

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## Iona



The small island of Iona, off the coast of the larger Hebridean island of Mull, has been an important centre of Christianity in Scotland since the 6th century AD. In AD 563 the Irish-born St Columba founded a monastery on Iona and began his mission to convert Scotland, and particularly the Pictish north, to Christianity. St Columba died in AD 597 and had become so influential that for centuries afterwards the kings of Scotland were buried at his remote monastery in Iona, and the island remains Scotland's most iconic spiritual destination to this day. When the kingdoms of the Picts and the Scots were first united in AD 843, the relics of St Columba were removed from Iona and taken to the new royal capital of Dunkeld in Perthshire in a casket that became known as the Monymusk Reliquary. The Reliquary became a symbol of Scottish independence and was carried into the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, although today it can be found in the much more tranquil surroundings of the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.



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# Alba



Kenneth (or Cináed) mac Alpin is often said to be the first king of Scotland, for around AD 843 he is believed to have become king of both Scots and Picts, so uniting the two nations. In all probability the union between Picts and Scots was a more gradual process involving royal intermarriages and concurrent violent uprisings over a long period of time. However, what made Kenneth mac Alpin a pivotal figure in Scottish history was the Alpin dynasty that would follow. By the 10th century it had established the Gaelic-speaking nation of Alba, and through the Tanistry system of royal succession, by which the crown would pass to the most powerful member of the royal family, rather than the eldest son, it would rule Alba until 1034. The name 'Alba' is derived from the same root as 'Albion', the ancient name for the island of Britain, and it remains the Gaelic name for Scotland to this day.

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## The Stone of Destiny



According to legend, the Stone of Destiny, the iconic symbol of Scottish nationhood, which today resides in Edinburgh Castle, is the very stone that was both Jacob's pillow in *The Book of Genesis* and the ancient stone upon which the first Scots kings were crowned in their kingdom of Dalriada from the 5th century AD onwards. In the 9th century, Kenneth mac Alpin transferred the Stone from Dunstaffnage in Argyll to Scone in Perthshire, where until 1297 all kings of first Alba, and then Scotland, were solemnly crowned on the sacred sandstone where Jacob once slept.

In 1297, Edward I of England removed the Stone from Scone to Westminster Abbey in London, where it would remain for 700 years as a seemingly permanent reminder of the supremacy of the English over their Scottish neighbours. The Stone was briefly liberated by enterprising Scottish nationalists in 1950, but was formally returned to Scotland only in 1996. However, whether because of doubts concerning its authenticity, or because of its current residence in Edinburgh rather than Scone, the Stone of Destiny has yet to regain the same national potency that it acquired in exile.

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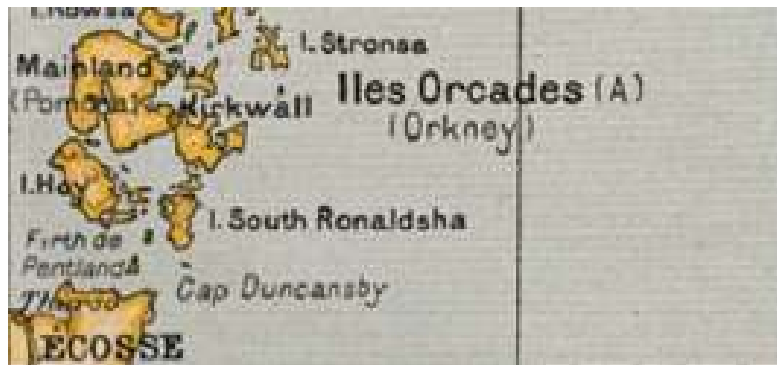
## The Vikings



The earliest recorded Viking or Norse attack on Scotland took place in AD 794, and in the 9th century vast areas of Scotland – from Galloway in the south to Shetland in the north – were invaded by these fearsome warriors, who sailed from Norway in their mighty longships. The first Vikings came to raid and plunder, but future generations had more permanent aspirations. While the nation of Scotland was being united as one kingdom in the 11th century, it was the king of Norway, rather than the king of Scotland, who ruled the islands and much of the northern mainland of Scotland. By the 12th century the Norwegians had lost control of their mainland territory, and after losing the Battle of Largs in 1263, they ceded the Hebrides to Scotland in the Treaty of Perth in 1266. However, this would not be the end of Scandinavian influence on the history of Scotland, as Orkney and Shetland remained under first Norwegian and then Danish sovereignty until 1469. The Norse legacy can still be found today in numerous place names throughout the country that stand as a reminder of those formidable and terrifying raiders who eventually settled in their new homeland.

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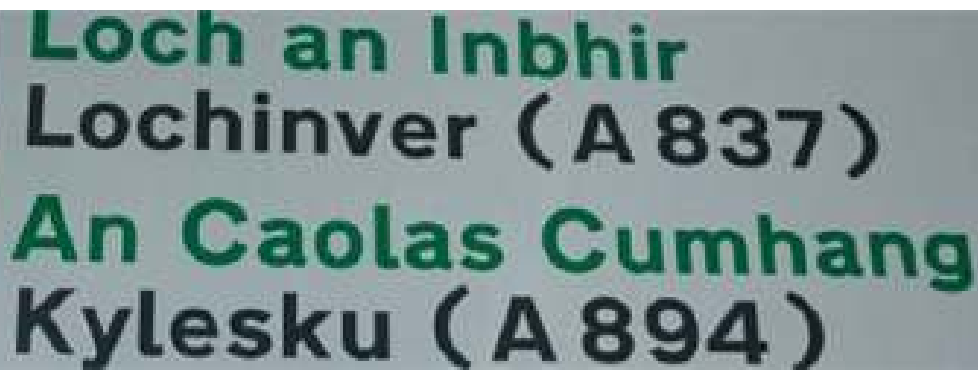
## The Northern Isles



From the 9th to the 13th centuries, the Northern Isles of the Orkney and Shetland archipelagos were ruled by the Scandinavian successors to the first Viking raiders. Their leaders were given the title of Earl (or 'Jarl' in Norse) of Orkney, with the most famous being the martyr St Magnus, after whom the 12th-century St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney, is named. In 1235 the title of Earl passed from Norse to Scottish hands, but sovereignty remained with first the Norwegian and then the Danish crowns, to whom the Scottish Earls continued to swear allegiance. In 1469, Orkney and Shetland were offered to Scotland as a dowry for the marriage of Danish princess Margaret to James III, and they have remained part of Scotland ever since, albeit continuing to speak the Old Norse language of Norn until the 18th century, and in Shetland celebrating their Viking heritage with the annual Up Helly Aa winter fire festival. The acquisition of the Northern Islands completed the map of Scotland that we know today, even if in reality this means Orkney and Shetland are regularly relegated to inserts several hundred miles south of their actual location.

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## Place names



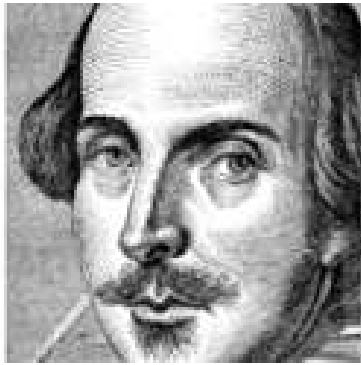
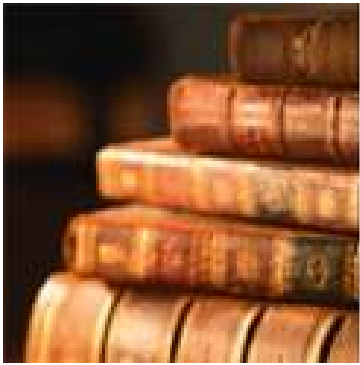
Loch an Inbhir  
Lochinver (A 837)  
An Caolas Cumhang  
Kylesku (A 894)

The place names of Scotland reflect the country's diverse heritage. The majority of Scottish place names are either of Gaelic, Scots, or English origin and roughly follow a Highland–Lowland geographical divide. In Strathclyde and the southwest there are numerous reminders of the old Celtic language of Cumbric (or Brythonic), which comes from the same linguistic family as modern-day Welsh. In the Northern and Western Isles centuries of Scandinavian and Viking rule have left a smorgasbord of place names of Norse origin. Meanwhile, the language of the once-mighty Picts has been all but excluded from the geography of the country they ruled for a millennium.

Under the aegis of the British Empire, when Scots left their homeland to make new lives in the New World, they took their place names with them. Perth in Australia, Calgary in Canada, and Dunedin (the ancient name for Edinburgh) in New Zealand are all named in honour of their Scottish equivalents, while probably the most unexpected example of global Scottish influence is the city of Blantyre in Malawi, named after the Lanarkshire birthplace of 19th-century explorer David Livingstone.

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## Macbeth



The nation of Scotland as we know it today was established in 1034 when Duncan I became king of both Alba and Strathclyde. Duncan ruled as king of Scotland until 1040, but became better known as the Duncan who was murdered in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* – or, as it is often known, 'The Scottish Play' – written three years after the Scottish James VI's accession as king of England and Ireland in 1603. The titular antihero of the play was a warlord from Moray by the name of Mac Bethad mac Findlaich, who, after defeating Duncan, ruled Scotland from 1040 to 1057, when he was in turn defeated and killed by Duncan's son, the future Malcolm III. There are many historical inaccuracies to be found in the play: Duncan was not an elderly man when he was killed, Macbeth was not defeated at Birnam Wood in Perthshire, and, by the standards of the time, Macbeth's reign was relatively peaceful. However, thanks to Shakespeare's genius the reputations of Scotland's second king and his queen (whose real name was Gruoch) were forever tarnished, albeit with the consolation that Macbeth became the most famous Scottish monarch there has ever been.



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## St Margaret



Malcolm III, or Malcolm Canmore (meaning ‘great chief’), became king of Scotland in 1058, one year after the death of Macbeth. He ruled a nation that now included both Lothian and Strathclyde, established Dunfermline in Fife as his new capital, and attempted to gain further land in the north of England. In 1069, Malcolm married Margaret, an exiled English Saxon princess who was born in Hungary, and together they ruled Scotland until 1093.

Margaret was a deeply devout woman and under her influence the English language would be introduced into the Scottish royal court, and the Scottish church was reformed and fully incorporated into the established Catholic Church. Three of Malcolm and Margaret’s sons (Edgar, Alexander, and David) succeeded Malcolm as king, and the Canmore dynasty ruled Scotland until 1290. Queen Margaret was canonized as St Margaret in 1250 and Margaret remained one of the most popular female names in Scotland until the late 20th century, which coincidentally was exactly the same time as a certain British Prime Minister with the same name came to power.



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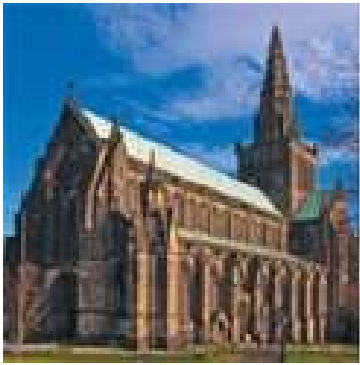
## Edinburgh



It was long thought that Scotland's capital was named after Edwin, a Northumbrian king who ruled in the 7th century. However, people have been living on the volcanic rock that today is the site of Edinburgh Castle from at least the 1st century, and the name 'Edinburgh' is now believed to derive from the ancient and straightforward Cumbric meaning of 'fort on the rock'. This fort was captured by the kings of Alba in the 10th century, and became a Scottish royal residence of Malcolm III and Margaret in the 11th century. The Edinburgh Castle that we know today dates back to the 12th century with the chapel dedicated to Margaret being its oldest surviving building. The Old Town of Edinburgh began to be built around the Castle and was awarded royal burgh status in the 12th century, but it would not be until the 15th century that Edinburgh, then the largest town in Scotland, finally became recognized as the nation's capital.

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## Glasgow



Although it has never been the nation's capital, Glasgow has been the largest city in Scotland since the 19th century. According to legend, Glasgow was founded on the banks of the River Clyde in the 6th century AD by the Christian missionary and patron saint of Glasgow, St Kentigern, who was also known by the name of St Mungo (meaning 'dear friend'). The church that he built there became the site of Glasgow Cathedral, which was mostly constructed in the 13th century. When Kentigern was alive, the ancient Celtic language of Cumbric was the principal language of Strathclyde and the southwest of Scotland, and the name 'Glasgow' derives from the Cumbric, meaning 'green hollow'. St Kentigern (or St Mungo) was an important figure in the conversion of Scotland to Christianity and is said to have performed four miracles involving a bird, a tree, a bell, and a fish. These objects remain the four symbols of the city of Glasgow to this day.

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