

Rex Pictorum

The History of the Kings of the Picts

Compiled from various ancient documents recorded in Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales, principally the 10th Century Pictish Chronicles, *Rex Pictorum* is an inventory of the kings of Pictland, together with biographical information where available, and general historical notes and appendices on the Pictish people themselves.

Foreword.

Standing one calm autumn day some years ago on the Moot Hill in Scone, I became aware that the falling leaves from the surrounding Beech trees were landing gently on the very site where the old Kings of Pictland had been crowned.

I noticed, from the apparent lack of interest shown, that none of the tourists wandering around the hill were giving much thought to the momentous deeds and events that had taken place there in Scotland's distant past and I confess that I felt a little sad. There was the odd comment about Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, having been crowned there, but nobody seemed to care about the Picts. Then it came to me that, in fairness to those visitors to Scone that sunny late September day, I shouldn't be surprised, for how could they be expected to show an interest in a People and a history about which they knew next to nothing? To all intents and purposes the Picts, even by the vast majority of Scots, are considered a forgotten race and a people of the past. Doomed, one might say, to oblivion.

I wished that somehow there were something I could do personally to make people more aware of the Picts, to bring them back from the 'Abyss', as it were. It was at that moment, while looking at the settling leaves, that I felt the inspiration to write their history down, for I recalled a short poem by Robert Louis Stevenson and I remember thinking at the time, 'how very, *very* apt'.

'A leaf is a letter,

From a tree,

That writes in gold.....

.....*Remember me!*

Ronald W. Henderson. Perth, Scotland.

Introduction.

Over the years a considerable number of books and articles have been written about the Picts and for the greater part they have been excellent and informative. Almost without exception however, their *raison d'être* has been to bring to the attention of the general public the amazing heritage that is Pictish Art. I refer of course, to the magnificent carved standing stones that the Picts left scattered over much of mainland Scotland and the equally stunning examples of their metal work, especially silverware, that grace the display cabinets in many of our museums. Scotland has been lucky enough to fall heir to some of the most outstanding pieces of so-called Dark Age art to be found anywhere in Europe, and the beauty of these pieces is, as anyone who has seen them will surely agree, simply beyond superlatives.

What is not often made accessible for scrutiny though, is the actual history of the Picts and their kings, and the reason for this is not very hard to find. Pictish history as a subject *per se* practically doesn't exist. As will become clear within these pages, we have absolutely no written records that were penned by the Picts themselves. Such few records that we *do* have were made by the historians of other Nations whose opinions on matters concerning the Picts were often quite inimical.

Nevertheless, whatever its source, it is a history of sorts which deserves to be told, and that is the *prima facie* reason for my little book. The ulterior reason for its existence is that I believe we should be encouraging the Scots of today to learn more of themselves and their cultural roots. Today's average young Scot is, to be frank, abysmally ignorant of his own country's accomplishments and the people and culture from which those accomplishments sprang. Place him or her in a situation where general knowledge, science or the arts are put to the test with contestants from other countries and more often than not the result will be, if not an outright win over his or her peers, then an admirable close second. Repeat the test, using this time awareness of one's own culture, and the results could hardly be more dissimilar. The foreign students will inevitably win hands down.

Intelligence is obviously not a factor to be considered here; the problem is simply that the Scots are not being taught about themselves and we ought, perhaps, to ask why this situation should exist. As to the risks inherent in this lack of knowledge however, let me relate a little story that will hopefully provide a perfect example of how better familiarity with their own cultural roots is so badly needed by many Scots.

Some years ago, I fell into conversation with a mechanic who was repairing my car. When he discovered that I was a traditional stone carver he became quite enlivened and told me that he had in his possession a piece of stone that I might be interested in seeing. It had been found many years ago by his father, now deceased.

The stone was described as being approximately one foot square (300mm. sq.) with unusual carvings on it, and, in the mechanic's own words, "There are funny looking grooves all along one side; kind of like Roman numerals but not Roman numerals". I couldn't believe my luck. It looked as if I was going to be shown a piece

of stone carved with what, according to the chap's description, were Pictish symbols and some Ogam script. He had no idea what Ogam script was but became fairly excited when I explained it to him so he invited me along to his house that evening to have a look at the stone and give my opinion as to what it was; Pictish or whatever.

We searched the shed where it was supposed to be lying. *No luck*. We then searched the big cupboard under the stairs. *Still no luck*. After looking throughout the whole house the lad eventually gave up and it dawned on him that it had probably been thrown out the last time he and his family, (lovely people incidentally), had moved house and the stone's present whereabouts were therefore quite unknown.

Whose fault is it things like this happen? Certainly not the mechanic's. He merely believed that he had in his possession a stone with "funny markings" on it and his dismay when it was explained to him what it might have been, and what he may have lost, was quite palpable. No. The fault lies fairly and squarely with the educational system in this country, where our children appear to be taught that every culture beyond Scotland's is admirable and superior, and that almost everything about Scottish culture is second rate and not really worth knowing about, far less learning.

I yearn for a day when Scottish children have a pride in their own culture, when history lessons in Scottish schools are given from a Scottish perspective instead of a north British one, and when every school child in Scotland knows at the very *least* what Ogam script is and who the Picts really were. Perhaps then tales like that of the mechanic and his lost stone with its 'funny marks' will become a thing of the past.

This book is aimed at the intelligent general reader, but it is expected that there will be enough scholastic speculation within its pages to stimulate the mind of even the most erudite of academics. Hopefully too, sufficient adventures of the Pictish Warlords to ignite a spark of imagination within the minds of our school children, encouraging them to enquire further into the story of our ancestors.

For myself, I believe that I have been as diligent and careful as is humanly possible in all the research I have undertaken in writing this book. I have truly burned the midnight-low-cost energy saving light bulb. I therefore trust that the reader will be generous and warm hearted enough to make allowances for those few mistakes, if any, that have slipped through my fingers onto the page, and I will be glad to have them pointed out to me. For any of those frightful little imps and horrors that may be found lurking within, (and I honestly do not anticipate them), I sincerely apologise.

With regard to what foreign contemporary writers said of the Picts, let me add, in closing, a quotation from a Spanish born Roman scholar. This particular gentleman was writing at just about the same time as Agricola and his army were marching into Caledonia, presumably bringing north to the natives who lived there the 'benefits' of the 'Pax Romana'.

"The reader should not at once persuade himself that all things that even the best writers have said are absolutely perfect." Quintilian.c.30
A.D.-c.100A.D.

The Foundation Legends.

*'Cruithnigh cid dos farclam In-iath Alban n-amhra?
Go n-a m-brigh bil beldha Cia tir as nach tarlla?'*

'The Cruithneach, (the Picts), who established them in the noble land of Alban?
With glorious illustrious might from what region did they come?'

So begins an ancient poem written in Old Irish concerning the origins of the Picts. This poem forms part of the so-called 'Irish additions' to the 'Historia Britonum', a masterful piece of work compiled and written in Latin around the late 8th and early 9th centuries by the Welsh historian known as 'Nennius'. Although the Irish poem was composed around the early part of the 11th century, (and we know that it was certainly written before the death of MacBeth in 1057 A.D. for it mentions him in one particular stanza as if he were still alive), it is believed to draw on much older manuscripts, dating from possibly as far back as the 7th century. To our regret, those earlier manuscripts have long been lost.

The poem constitutes a part of what are known as the Pictish 'Foundation Legends', and it gives us some of the earliest pieces of information we have on that race of people. They lived in Scotland long before the Scots, (or at least the Scots' culture), came from Ireland, yet, even so, appear not to have been the original inhabitants of the country.

Surprising as it may be to some, we shall see later that a great many Scots of today are probably descended from the Picts and may unknowingly draw many of their attitudes and folk beliefs from them. Scottish readers may also be startled to discover that their roots, far from stemming in Ireland as is generally taught, might possibly lie in lands as far away as Egypt, Greece and Spain.

The poem, using William Skene's 1867 English translation, and in a much truncated form, (for the original runs to 46 verses), continues:

'How were they named before they came to attain their sovereignty,
From their own weapons. What was the name of their country?

Thracia was the name of their country, till they spread their sails,
After they had resolved to emigrate in the east of Europe.

Agathyrsi was their name, in the portion of Erchbi.
From the tattooing of their fair skins were they called Picti.

The Picts, the tribe I speak of, understood travelling over the sea,
Without mean unworthy deeds, the seed of Geloin, son of Ercoil.

Necromancy and idolatry, illusion, in a fair and well-walled house,
Plundering in ships, bright poems by them were taught.

The honouring of *sred* (rank?) and omens, choice of weather, lucky times,
The watching the voice of birds, they practised without disguise.

From thence they conquered Alba, the noble nurse of fruitfulness,
Without destroying the people from the region of Cat to Forchu.

Fifty kings of plundering career, every one of the Race of Eochaigh,
From Fergus, most truly, to the vigorous Mac Brethach (MacBeth).

Six kings and six times ten of them, who attended to bloody plunder,
They loved merry forays. They possessed the Kingdom of the Cruithneach'

This ancient poem, and the others like it, could not be called history as such, for it contains much of allegory and myth. Yet, upon examination, myths are often found to contain surprising amounts of verifiable information, and, as will be shown later in this book, such examination appears to confirm two of the main convictions that all the Foundation Legends have in common. Namely, that the Picts came from somewhere in the east, (Thrace, Scythia, etc.), and that they employed a system of government, based on elective matrilinear kingship, that dated back many centuries.

The First Kings.

We mustn't allow ourselves to think of these early kings as being quaint, couthy characters, similar to the kind of thing we are used to seeing in comic books. That is, wee fat roly-poly men, with a gold crown on their heads and wearing a cloak trimmed with ermine. This popular stereotype couldn't be further from the truth. The kings of Pictland had to be strong, robust, fit individuals, with the sort keen eye and sharp mind that could be relied upon to defend the people in times of war or hardship.

Their identifying mark of royal rank is also unlikely to have been a crown (though the king may have worn some sort of circlet when in council), and there is certainly no evidence in any of the Pictish carved stones of anyone wearing such an ungainly impractical thing. Helmets yes, but crowns, no.

As the years rolled on and times changed however, some form of ceremonial regalia would have been given to the king out of respect for his supreme status within the realm or nation. It is impossible to say with any certainty what sort of regalia was worn by Pictish kings in Dark Age Scotland, yet we may have the answer in several massive silver chains that have been found throughout Pictland; three in the north of the country and seven in the south. All of these chains are double linked and five of them have penannular terminal rings, two of which bear engraved Pictish symbols impregnated with red enamel. Ten of these silver chains have been found so far, and they weigh from 22oz. to 92.5oz. (approx. 1 to 2 .5 kg.) each.

They are of outstanding workmanship and it has been suggested that, as they are only around 18 inches (45 cm.) long, i.e. too small to be worn around the neck with any degree of comfort, they would most likely have been worn across the chest. It may be envisaged that they would extend from shoulder to shoulder, to be held in place at their terminals by large silver pins or possibly cords.

The Pictish Kings were Warlords. Their word was law, and that means that the supreme authority they wielded would have included acting at times of arbitration as both judge and jury. We can imagine our frowning Pictish Overlord, mulling and deliberating in judgement with a glittering sword on his knees, a gold Celtic brooch fastening his long woollen cloak, and one of those huge gleaming silver chains stretched across his chest. Say what you like, but that would *have* to impress you.

Eat your heart out King Roly-Poly.

CALGACUS

Although not recorded on any of the Scottish or Irish lists of Pictish kings, the first undoubted chieftain or king of the Picts on whom we have any reliable documentation was the leader of the Caledonians at the battle of Mons Graupius in 83 A.D. His name was Calgacus, which is the Latin form of a very old Celtic word 'Calgach', probably meaning 'The Swordsman', and derived from 'Calg', signifying anything sharp, like a spear or sword. The modern Gaelic adjective '*Calgach*' can mean either passionate or piercing.

The Romans, under Agricola, had marched into Northern Britain in order to quell the 'rebellious' tribes who lived there. It was just before the onset of winter. At a place called by the Romans Mons Graupius, (thought to be near Bennachie in Aberdeenshire, or possibly Duncrub in the County of Perth, though there have been many other feasible suggestions), they were met by a huge and resolute army of angry Caledonian patriots, determined to halt any further Roman incursions into their homeland.

The battle and its sorry outcome for the brave but sorely defeated Pictish host was well documented by the Roman historian Tacitus. He was, as it happens, Agricola's son in law, and writing in around 97 A.D. about Agricola's campaigns, i.e. only 14 years after the battle, Tacitus also gave us what was supposed to be Calgacus' rousing speech before the conflict. It is claimed that Tacitus could not possibly have known what Calgacus said to his troops, yet one particular phrase from the speech has a genuine 'feel' about it, as if Tacitus had heard it himself from the lips of captured Pictish warriors, and was moved to record it for posterity.

It may possibly be described as a romantic view, but we can probably picture Calgacus, described by Tacitus as 'A man of outstanding courage and lofty noble lineage', standing on a hillside and looking at the distant smoke of burning villages recently fallen under the 'protection' of the Pax Romana. He shakes his head, turns to his captains and says, almost under his breath, that unforgettable phrase:

"They create a wilderness and they call it peace."

Take a walk through any deserted Highland glen today and reflect upon those words. When you see the abandoned croft houses disappearing under bracken and heather you should feel the blood boiling in your veins if you are any kind of Scot at all. Tacitus' account tells us that 10,000 Caledonians lost their lives fighting for their country's independence in that dreadful battle. It is almost incomprehensible to conceive that all but two thousand long highland winters have passed since that day and that Calgacus' words are still coming true.

As for Calgacus himself we have no more information. He seems to have just disappeared from the pages of history. We can safely say however, that he wasn't killed on the battlefield, for his death would have been reported. Nor did the Romans capture him, as they would certainly have taken him back to Rome in chains and paraded him as a prize trophy in front of the Senate. This was the

Roman way of doing things and this was exactly what they had done with Vercingetorix, the leader of the Gauls, after his defeat at Alesia in 52 B.C. It is likely that Calgacus simply went to ground and became a guerrilla fighter, striking at the invaders of his country whenever he had a chance, and was similar in many ways to that other great Scottish patriot, William Wallace, who suffered his own 'Mons Graupius' over twelve hundred years later at Falkirk. Vercingetorix, incidentally, was kept in a cell for six years before being unceremoniously throttled to death.

One small extra piece of information has come down to us regarding this battle. It is the kind of snippet that makes you realise that actual mortal men were involved in these wars and that they were more than mere numbers in a list of historic conflicts.

From Roman Army records we have the name of an 'Auxiliary' (i.e. foreign soldier, serving as a professional) who is recorded as having been wounded at Mons Graupius and had to go to a field hospital after the battle to have his injuries treated. He was a 'Nervian' (Belgian), serving, it is believed, with the Ninth Legion, and his adopted Roman name (for you had to drop your own name if you wanted to get on in the Roman Army) was Marcus Aemilius. Recorded as having also fought in the Dacian campaigns (Romania), Marcus eventually retired with an army pension and settled down in a farm in Hungary where he died some years later and was laid to rest with his sword. Quite fitting for an old soldier who had 'done his bit.'

It feels as if we knew him. We practically admire him, and it's almost a pity that he was our enemy. Yet enemy he was, for Marcus Aemilius was a soldier in the Roman Army, and through guilt by association with the bitter experiences of people in invaded countries throughout the known world in the first century A.D. that made him a merciless professional killer; a contemptible mercenary who spared neither woman nor child in the relentless and bloody expansion of the Roman Empire.

This man may actually have cast his eyes upon Calgacus during the battle of Mons Graupius. He would have heard the bellowing roar of the boar headed Carnyx, (the fearsome war trumpet of the Picts), and ducked as volleys of arrows whistled over his head, finding slower moving targets behind him. He would have gritted his teeth as the Caledonian war chariots with their yelling spear-throwing riders charged remorselessly towards him and would have felt the ground tremble under his feet as the two massive armies crashed together in a chaotic tangle of 60,000 angry and frightened men. Given those formidable numbers this suggestion could hardly be considered likely, but it is *just, just*, possible that it was Calgacus himself who inflicted Marcus' wounds.

Now don't you think that is quite an interesting concept?

No one today knows the whereabouts of Calgacus' final resting-place. There doesn't even appear to be a modern stone raised anywhere to his memory. Surely this man, one of Scotland's most patriotic sons, deserves better than this opaque oblivion. Even a simple cairn or boulder with his name inscribed upon it would serve. No self-respecting nation would do less would they?

As the Romans themselves would have said of him: "*Sit tibi terra levis.*"
(May the earth be light upon you.)

Cruithne and his seven sons.

Transcribed from oral traditions in the 10th century, the earliest of the Pictish Chronicles (there are seven) begins with Cruithne and his seven sons, all of whom, along with Cruithne himself, are most likely mythical. They are probably the names of the seven provinces into which Alba, the land of the Picts, was divided at a very early stage in the nation's history. They may also be the ancient clan names of the tribes who inhabited those areas.

Cruithne, son of Cinge, according to an old legend recorded in the Irish 'Book of Lecain', was the first king of the Picts, and is supposed to have ruled for 100 years. His mysterious 'father', Cinge, may simply be a form of the obsolete Gaelic (or Pictish?) word 'cing', meaning strong or brave. It may also be a form of the word 'cinneadh' meaning clan, tribe, kindred or offspring. Cinge's own pedigree is given as 'son of Luchtai, son of Partolan, son of Agnoin, son of Buain, son of Mais, son of Fathecht, son of Japheth, the son of Noah'. These middle-eastern origins given to Cinge, and by their logical extension to the Picts, may not be mere fancy as we shall see later on.

The name Cruithne itself may have come from the early Irish word 'Cruth', meaning 'shape' or 'design'. This could possibly refer to the Picts' supposed habit of tattooing themselves (Picti-painted), or from their unique stone carvings that are likely to have been painted and highly coloured. It may also mean 'the people of the wheat'. Cruithne is described in the legends as having seven sons whose names were Cait, Ce, Cirig, Fib, Fidach, Fotla and Fortrenn. These sons (probably clans) had Pictland divided up between them, and had territories named after them. Some of these can still be identified in our modern place names.

Cait, legendary progenitor of the Cat clan, was given Caithness and Sutherland.

Ce was given Mar and Buchan. Possibly seen in the name Bennachie.

Cirig was given Angus and the Mearns, formerly known as *Magh Circinn*, i.e. the Plain of Circinn.

Fib was given Fife, a very old name; its original meaning lost in obscurity.

Fidach was given Moray and Ross. Fidach may mean 'the wood dwellers'.

Fotla was given Atholl and Gowrie. Atfodla was the old form of Atholl, which means 'the ford of Fotla'. She was a Celtic goddess, and Ireland was sometimes called after her in poetic fashion. The name Atholl is often claimed to be derived from '*Ath Fhodhla*', said to mean 'New Ireland'. This is quite incorrect however, as the Gaelic word '*Ath*' means 'next' and not 'new', or, as we have already seen, it can mean a ford in a river.

Fortrenn was given Strathearn and Menteith. Anciently, Strathearn (southern Perthshire) was known as Fortrenn, which is believed to mean ‘the people of the slow winding river’. Strathearn may mean the valley of the Irish (Eireann), but could be from ‘AR’, a pre-Celtic word meaning flowing water.

An old poem, preserved in the 11th century Irish additions to Nennius’ 8th century ‘Historia Britonum’ and said to been written by St. Columba, relates:

*“Moirsheiser do Cruithne clainn,
Raindset Albain i secht raind,
Cait, Ce, Cirig, cethach clan,
Fib, Fidach, Fotla, Fortrenn.”*

Which translates as: “Seven sons of Cruithne then,
Into seven divided Alba,
Cait, Ce, Cirig, a warlike clan,
Fib, Fidach, Fotla and Fortrenn.”

Our list of Pictish Kings begins properly with King Gede. As with Cruithne and his seven sons, it is the view of many historians that the names of all the earliest kings, from Gede (No. 1) right up to, though not including, Brude son of Mailcon (No.38), are also mythical. That is not a view that is automatically shared by this author, who sees no reason to reject the validity of the King Lists, and is prepared to accept their provenance.

Regarding the lengths of the earliest reigns (150, 100, 15, 40, 7, 50 years etc.), they are probably of some mystical religious significance that has been lost to us. The scribes who recorded the King Lists were not silly people. They knew that no one could reign, as King Gede is supposed to have done, for 150 years, nor King Tharain for 100. We must simply show what was recorded at the time and accept that they had their own reasons for giving them such extraordinarily long reigns.

The spellings of the names look strange. This is because the Lists were written using both Latin and Gaelic and were an attempt to reproduce Pictish pronunciation in Latin or Gaelic forms. We cannot even be sure which language (or languages) the Picts spoke. The Ogam script that they used on their stone carvings is, in many instances, badly worn, and often indecipherable, whilst the meaning and translation of those inscriptions that have managed to survive the worst that Scottish winters have been able to throw at them is the subject of heated debate among scholars.

The reader’s confusion may be further compounded when it is realised that the Picts pronounced the letter W (sometimes shown as UU i.e. double-U) with an F sound from around the 7th century onwards. That is, Uurad or Wrad became Ferad, and Uurguist became Forguis or Fergus. This peculiarity of speech, which is a joy to listen to, can still be heard to this day in the North-East

of Scotland where the word 'what' is pronounced 'fit', and the word 'where' is pronounced 'faur'.

The sources used and the fate of others.

Sadly we have no documents at all that were written by the Picts themselves. They were destroyed along with many of Scotland's other ancient documents and relics during the course of one invasion after another. The Vikings are reported to have thrown hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts that they had plundered from our abbeys into the sea from their longships. Hundreds more were looted by King Edward I of England in the 13th century when he sought to rob Scotland of her identity by extirpating her history and sense of self. This so-called 'Hammer of the Scots' behaved, according to a contemporary writer, 'like a common thief'. A total of 65 boxes of Scottish documents were robbed from Scone Abbey and Edinburgh Castle alone. We have no idea of the true scale of the loss. More yet was lost during the Reformation and religious wars of the 17th century. Any final scraps that remained surrendered their fate to Scotland's damp climate and disintegrated from the effects of mildew and rot.

Almost all that we have of our own ancient history has come to us from the hands of Irish clerics who spent so much of their lives recording all that was going on around them. We have so much for which to thank those Irish scribes. Were it not for them we should know practically nothing about the Picts and Scotland's past, and we would all have been so much the poorer for it.

The King List is chronological in only the broadest sense. Many of the reigns overlapped one another as two kings often ruled Pictland at the same time, with lengths of reign differing for each king. Due to civil wars among the Picts and constantly changing leadership at these times, the situation was made even more difficult for the scribes who were compiling the lists.

Another problem lies in the multitude of differing spellings for each king's name. Each scribe had his own subjective opinion as to how the names should be transcribed and consequently names can vary considerably from one manuscript to another. Which of these names, for example, is the correct form of spelling for the king who was the 'son of Irb' ? (no.26). Is it Necton, Nechton, Nechthon, Nectan, Nechtan, Nathad, Netthad, Netthan, Nectane, Nethan or Naiton?

That is eleven different spellings for just one name. (Who would be a linguist?)

Due to this profusion of assorted spellings the author of this work has therefore been subjective himself, and has chosen those forms which he personally believes reflect most accurately the correct Pictish name for each king. Doubtless there will be those who disagree with his choice, and that of course is their prerogative. He does not claim that his selection is necessarily the correct one. Several academic works give the various alternative spellings for the names of the Pictish Kings, and there have been assorted attempts (some rather spurious it must be said) at translating them. The bibliography at the end of this book gives a fairly broad selection of those titles currently available that cover this subject and others related.

Following the King List, after a short discussion on the phenomenon known as 'matrilinear succession', will be found such biographical information as is available on the kings, given in an easy to read format. This information will

follow the same sequential form as that of the King List, with numbers added to assist readers in their study.

Charlemagne, King of the Franks (742-814 A.D.) and a great patron of the arts, is recorded as having said, "To possess another language is to possess another soul." With that sage advice in mind therefore, several selected pieces of script from the ancient chronicles have been given in the original Old Irish and Latin, in which languages they were written. It is hoped that by having done so, readers might be accorded the opportunity of immersing themselves further into the Dark Age, or Early Medieval period which this book covers.

It can be all too easy to underestimate the difficult and painstaking work that was carried out by those early scribes. They did not have our modern comforts of electric light with central heating in their homes, and knew nothing of computers and word processors. They were forced by their limiting circumstances to work by the light of a guttering candle and use their own home made ink and parchment, i.e. the skin of a sheep or goat, as their writing medium. Yet, in spite of these hardships, they were often able to compose some of the most beautiful pieces of poetry and prose to be found anywhere, written not only in their own native tongue, but also in Latin and often in Greek. It practically beggars belief that they were able to accomplish what they did.

All such pieces have been translated into English. Hopefully not too much of the beauty of these old languages has been lost in doing so.

The List of Kings of the Picts.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Length of Reign (years)</u>
1	Gede	50, 100 or 150 years
2	Tharain	100
3	Morleo	15
4	Duchil	40
5	Cimoiod son of Arcois	7
6	Deordegele	20 or 50
7	Bliesblituth	5
8	Deototreic brother of Diu	40 or 60
9	Usconbutis	20
10	Crautreic	40
11	Deordivois	20
12	Uist	50
13	Ru	100
14	Gartnait Bolc	4
15	Gartnait Ini	9
16	Breth son of Buthut	7
17	Vipogwenech	30
18	Fiacha Albus	30
19	Cantulmet	4 or 6
20	Dornornauch Nerales	1
21	Feradech Finlegh	2
22	Gartnaich Diuberr	60
23	Talarg son of Achivir	25 or 75
24	Drust son of Irb	100
25	Tholarg son of Anile	4 or 2
26	Nechtán Morbet son of Irb	10 or 24
27	Drust Gocinecht	30
28	Galanan Erilich	12 or 15
29	Drust son of Gurum	5
30	Drust son of Wdrost	8
31	Drust son of Gurum	4 or 5
32	Garthnac son of Gurum	6 or 7
33	Cailtran son of Gurum	1 or 6
34	Talorg son of Muircholaich	11
35	Drust son of Moneth	1
36	Tagaled	4
37	Tagaled and Brude (jointly)	1
38	Brude son of Mailcon	30
39	Gartnait son of Domnach	11 or 20
40	Nechtán grandson or nephew of Uerb	20 or 21
41	Cinioch son of Lutrín	14, 19 or 24
42	Gartnait son of Uuid	5 or 8
43	Brude son of Uuid	5

44	Talorg son of Uuid	11 or 12
45	Talargan son of Anfrud	4
46	Gartnait son of Donnel	5 or 6 ½
47	Drust son of Donnel	6 or 7
48	Brude son of Bile	21
49	Taran son of Entifidich	4 or 14
50	Brude son of Derili	11 or 31
51	Nechtán son of Derili	18
52	Carnach son of Ferach	24
53	Oengus son of Fergus	16
54	Nechtán son of Derili	9 months
55	Oengus son of Brude	6 months
56	Alpin son of Engus	8 years
57	Alpin son of Engus and Drust son of Talorgen (jointly)	5
58	Oengus son of Uurguist	30
59	Brude son of Uurguist	2
60	Engus son of Brude	3
61	Brude son of Engus	2
62	Alpin son of Engus	8
63	Ciniod son of Wredech	12
64	Elpin son of Wroid	3 ½
65	Drust son of Talorgen	1
66	Talorgen son of Drustan	4 or 5
67	Talorgen son of Engus	2 ½, 5 or 12 ½
68	Canaul son of Tarl'a	5
69	Constantin son of Wrguist	35 or 42
70	Unnuist son of Wrguist	10 or 12
71	Drust son of Constantin, jointly with	
72	Talorgen son of Wthoil	3 or 4
73	Uuen son of Unuist	3
74	Ferach son of Bacoc	3
75	Brude son of Ferach	1 year or 1 month
76	Kineth son of Ferach	1
77	Brude son of Fokel	2
78	Drust son of Ferach	3
79	Cináed (Kenneth) son of Alpin	16

As will be seen from the list, each king was identified by his own father's name, and not by that of the preceding monarch. E.g. Talorg son of Uuid (No.44) is succeeded by Talargan son of Anfrud (45) and then by Gartnait son of Donnel (46). Normally we would expect to see Talorg son of Uuid succeeded by Talargan son of Talorg, succeeded by Gartnait son of Talargan. With very few exceptions, sons did not succeed their fathers onto the throne, and it is only towards the end of the List, when Pictish independence was drawing to a close and Pictish royalty began intermarrying with that of the Dalriadan Scots, that this rule was broken or relaxed.

The reason for this rule was that the Picts, while obviously a patriarchal society, appear to have practised a system of succession known as matrilinear. Under this arrangement a son did not automatically follow his father onto the throne. Rather it was through the female royal line that the crown was inherited. Below is another Irish addition in the 'Historia Britonum' that gives us an idea of just how strongly this principle and 'golden rule' was adhered to by the Picts.

<i>“Badar ratha forro</i>	“There were oaths imposed on them
<i>Frid rennu fri dire</i>	By the stars, by the earth
<i>Conidh soire a mathar</i>	That from the nobility of the mother
<i>Ro gnath gabh irrighe.”</i>	Should always be the right to the

sovereignty”.

With matrilinear succession, when a Pictish king died or was deposed, he would be succeeded by either:

- a) One of his brothers. (Though not a brother's son)
- b) One of his mother's sister's sons. (A first cousin)
- c) One of his sister's sons. (A nephew)
- d) The son of a first female cousin.

There were several advantages to this system:

- 1) Rather than have a *de facto* heir born to be king, there would have been lots of room for discussion as to which of the possible heirs would be best suited to the job.
- 2) The kingdom would not be encumbered by a king who was too young to rule effectively as the age range for choice of leader would cover as much as 30 years.
- 3) No single family would retain control.
- 4) The risk of inbreeding with all its inherent dangers would be greatly reduced.
- 5) It would be relatively easy to replace an incompetent king with a superior one.

This core belief in having the ability and freedom to pick and choose your king, and the concept of getting rid of him if he does not meet expectations, is very deeply ingrained in the Scottish psyche and is almost certainly a result of historic Pictish influence. It is best demonstrated in the Declaration of Arbroath (1320 A.D.), where it says of King Robert I (The Bruce)

“ Yet if he should give up what he has begun, and agree to make us or our Kingdom subject to the King of England or the English, we should exert ourselves at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own rights and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King; for, as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we fight, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself. ”

John Mair, a teacher in Glasgow University and scholar of European repute, writing in his famous 'Historia Majoris Britanniae' which he completed in 1518 A.D. states, in a rather more prosaic fashion;

"A king has not the same unconditional possession of his kingdom as you have of your coat.....It is the free people who first give power to the King, and his power depends on the whole people. Fergus, the first King of Scots, had no other law, and so it is everywhere, and was so in general since the world began."

In other words, the people's freedom mattered more than the fate of their king. Pictish elective procedure, through matriliney, had simply taken this principle a stage further, and who would argue that this was surely a much healthier and better method of finding a new king, or suitable heir to the throne, than the questionable patrilinear practice which is still used by Royal Families in several countries throughout the World, and embraced so wholeheartedly by their various political establishments, to this day.

Under the patrilinear system, whatever the Nation or State, and whatever the political set-up, is thus accorded to the members of one particular progeny, whatever their apparent attributes or obvious lack of them, an almost god like status and seeming presumption besides, of a divine right to continue henceforth in like manner, for all of eternity without let or hindrance.

Perhaps we should not allow ourselves to be surprised. In some countries of the world, where their monarchies have long been abolished for the very reasons given above, we have the supreme irony that in many of these Republics, which are often held up to be paragons of democratic virtue, the elected President can be seen to be openly engineering the political system so that his son, irrespective of his suitability for the job, can merrily follow his father's footsteps to take his own appointed place on the 'throne'. The general public, though quite well aware of this odious practice, often happily endorses what is happening by voting for the new 'Prince' and his palace officials at election time.

It would seem that we humans have a weakness for allowing ourselves to be governed by blood and inheritance rather than intelligence and common sense, and it appears to be hard wired into our collective psyche. Try as we may to eradicate it, whether by bloody revolution or Act of Parliament, there it sits, waiting to spring forth at the earliest opportunity from our subconscious minds like some kind of mad Houdini out of a box.

The Picts apparently knew and understood all of this very well. Therefore they rejected it out of hand and continued to do so for century upon century, generation after generation. Yet even today, for all our vaunted belief in the advantages of democracy, the opinions of the Picts on the inherent dangers of patrilinear monarchy would undoubtedly be regarded by some as seditious.

Perhaps the Picts could have taught us a thing or two about the frailty of human psychology regarding the principles of democratic governance.

Biographies of the Kings.

1) **Gede**

Also shown in the Chronicles as Gud, Gilgidi, and Gede Olgudach, he is presented as the first true king after the sons of Cruithne. It has been suggested that his name might simply signify that he was the first in the line, as the Gaelic word for 'first' is the similar sounding '*ceud*'. E.g. '*an ceud fhear*' – the first man.

However, there is no real reason to suppose him not to have been an actual person. He is believed, according to the Chronicles, to have reigned for a staggering one hundred and fifty years. It is likely though that the figure of 150 says more about this king's importance, or standing in the community, than it does about an imagined healthy life span. We know next to nothing about King Gede for the reasons discussed earlier, i.e. lack of documentation, yet, in spite of that, and against all the odds, we may have found his final resting-place.

High on a rise in the eastern end of the Ochil hills can be found the remains of a cairn, shown on the Ordnance Survey maps as 'Cairn Geddes'. (O.S. Landranger 58. Grid Ref. NO.120.131). Gede, along with its other forms such as Ged, Geddes, Geddie and Geddis is a very old name in Scotland and is possibly derived from the Gaelic word '*gead*', meaning a measure of land. It may be a 'Q' Celtic version of the Pictish word 'Pit' or 'Pett', meaning the same thing

The remains of this cairn are rather sparse. A small heap of stones about five feet high (one metre fifty) has been gathered in the middle of the cairn by occasional visitors, but by far the greater part was robbed for building material sometime in the early 19th century, apparently for the construction of drains and dykes. It was noted at the time of the plunder (some might say desecration), that the cairn was found to contain "a rude stone coffin". Sadly, no archaeological work appears to have been carried out at the site and no mention was made of any bones or metal or other items of interest being discovered. There is every likelihood anyway that, given the landowner's obvious disrespect for the past, all such items would have been discarded as worthless or simply pocketed as souvenirs.

What happened to the coffin is not recorded, but it is not impossible that the labourers reburied it when the bulk of the stonework had been removed. Let us hope so.

The approximate dimensions of the cairn can still be traced on the ground and enough of the base has been left for us to make an intelligent guess as to its original size. It appears to have been ellipsoid (oval) in shape, and lay along a N.N.E. to S.S.W. axis with the southern end pointing to the mid-winter sunset. The length measures roughly 66 feet (20.3 metres) and the width measures 54 feet (16.6 metres). It is of course impossible to say for sure the height of the original cairn, but it is likely to have been at least a quarter of its length which would have made it about 15 feet (4.6 metres) high. We don't know the depth of the foundations so they haven't been taken into consideration in any of the following calculations.

These dimensions have been appraised by a mathematician, and his calculations, when rounded, give an approximate volume of 28,000 cubic feet (815 cubic metres). Allowing for 25% spacing due to the irregular shape of the stones and boulders used in the cairn's construction, this gives us a volume of 21,000 cubic feet (600 cubic metres) of solid stone. As sandstone weighs about 150 lbs. (68 kilos.) per cubic foot, this cairn would therefore have weighed at *least* a whopping *one thousand four hundred tons*. Imagine the organisation and the logistics involved in its creation. You have got to be someone pretty important to get a cairn like that raised to your memory and the first High King of the Picts would have been just such a person.

Nearby, to the south of the cairn, nestles lonely Loch Whirr, whose scored rocks bear testimony to the rigours of the Ice Age and whose calm waters now provide a pleasant home for a family of swans. Whirr is an unusual name, and its descent may be of some interest to students of Toponymy, (place-name research). There is little doubt that 'Whirr' has derived from the Scottish pronunciation of a Perthshire Gaelic word '*Uir*', meaning a grave, mound or tomb, in the same manner that a Scottish mother's instruction to her bairns to 'Wheesht!' has come from the Gaelic command, '*Isd*', meaning 'Be Quiet!' Loch Whirr simply means the loch of the burial mound.

At mid-day, as the mid-winter sun gradually sets, Loch Whirr turns golden when observed from the cairn. We can assume that this spectacular phenomenon was taken into the consideration of the people who raised the mound, for the site was obviously chosen with some care. Although it sits only 900 feet (278 metres) above sea level, the views from this ancient tomb are absolutely stunning.

To the east can be seen the whole range of the Lomond Hills in Fife and to the far south can be seen the Pentlands. To the west lies Craig Rossie, proud and prominent above the ancient towns of Dunning and Auchterarder. The view then sweeps across the Crieff Hills with the peaks around Glen Almond showing clearly on the horizon and carries on through the mountains north of Dunkeld and Pitlochry, leading one to the Braes above the Carse of Gowrie. The observer's eye then moves north east, towards the hills of Angus, before finally settling on distant Dundee, across the river Tay.

Some places are said to reek of history, but the area surrounding Cairn Geddes positively marinades in it. Nearby runs the 'Wallace Road', so called because Sir William Wallace used this track in his campaigns against the English, though it is believed to be much older, having been used originally by the Romans as a marching route to their fort at Carpow near Abernethy. The route later became a coach road and was travelled by Sir Walter Scott who mentioned the view in the opening pages of his book, 'The Fair Maid of Perth'.

There is much evidence of Bronze Age settlement in the area, including a cup marked boulder and a Druid's 'Rocking Stone' (though, somewhat depressingly, neither rocking nor rolling since sometime in the nineteen-sixties), and the author has personally found two flint tools,

dated to around 5000 years old, within a quarter mile of the cairn. Prehistoric forts dot the surrounding landscape.

The Irish 'Book of Lecain', tells us that a certain Gede, King of the Cruithne, ruled over Ireland as well as Alba. "*The voices of all sounded as the music of the harp to each other, so great was the peace in his reign.*" If this was the same Gede he must have been some King.

We will probably never know for sure if Cairn Geddes was King Gede's burial tomb, but it is surely a great pity that this cairn, which could very well be the final resting place of the first true King of the Picts, lies today so neglected and forsaken by modern Scots.

2) **Tharain**

Tharain, it has been suggested, may be a corrupted form of the Gaelic word '*dara*', as in '*an dara aon*' – the second one; but it is more likely to be cognate to a Gaulish word meaning thunder.

3) –23) Inclusive.

We have no information on these kings apart from their names and supposed lengths of reign. As stated above, other writers have made various suggestions as to their meanings, but mostly without much sign of success. The names are just too obscure.

24) **Drust** son of **Irb**

Known as 'Drust of the Hundred Battles', who lived a hundred years, this hero king probably became a legend in his own lifetime. He was born around 407 A.D. when the Romans were leaving Britain. A true leader, he took control during the ensuing disruption and united all the Southern Picts under his banner, (which probably depicted a wild boar), and is thought to have set up safe harbours to protect his coastline from invasion by the Britons.

What is believed to be his fort, known as Trusty's (i.e. Drust's) Hill, lies at Anwoth near Gatehouse of Fleet in Galloway in Southwest Scotland. The ruins of this fort still exist, along with Pictish symbols comprising a double disc and 'Z' rod, a sea serpent, a geometric symbol which it has been suggested looks like a dagger, and what appears to be an insect's head, all carved on an outcrop of rock near the fort's entrance. This fort was partially excavated in 1960 by Charles Thomas and was found to date from pre-Roman times. Apart from the carvings no other evidence of Pictish occupation was discovered, so it is possible that Drust occupied the fort for a relatively short time before moving further north, probably to Abernethy in Perthshire.

A fresh water spring, thought to commemorate him, or his mysterious name-sake, St. Drostan, lies on the slopes of Dumbarrow Hill just south of Abernethy. This spring, known as the 'Katie Thirsty Well,' (note. not *Katie's*), gives the visitor beautiful extensive views across to the Lomond Hills in Fife, but is sadly neglected, and is now nothing more

than a group of four or five large stones showing where the water flows out of the ground. The name Katie is believed to be in remembrance of St. Katherine of Alexandria, thought to have been martyred early in the fourth century by the Emperor Maxentius who supposedly had her tied to a revolving wheel set with knives. The Catherine Wheel firework is named after her. Interestingly, Abernethy's northern namesake, Abernethy on Spey, absorbed an ancient parish that was dedicated to this same St. Katherine.

Drust himself can be found in the second word 'Thirsty' which is a corruption of his name; similar to that of 'Trusty', but incorporating a linguistic phenomenon known as metathesis, where two letters inside a word switch places, altering the sound. If there is any truth at all in this old legend then the Katie Thirsty well must be one of the oldest Christian sites in the whole of Scotland. Drust son of Irb died in 478 A.D.

25) **Tholarg** son of **Anile**

We have no information on this king apart from his length of reign, which was of either two or four years.

26) **Nechtán Morbet** son of **Irb**

Unless his supposed brother Drust (No.24) beat him to it, this king was the first to introduce Christianity to his people, c.485 A.D. Note that this was 80 years before St. Columba's mission to the Northern Picts in 565 A.D. Nechtán dedicated Abernethy church in Perthshire to St. Brigid, the first abbess of Kildare, whom he had met in Ireland while apparently banished there by King Drust. We are not told the reason why Nechtán was sent to Ireland by his elder brother, and in fact they may not even have been brothers. The age difference between the two seems too great to be realistic as Nechtán reigned for another 10, or possibly even 24 years. It is possible however that they both came from the same family tree and this could account for them both being sons of 'Irb', without them having the same father.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Nechtán's exile in Ireland seems to have affected him greatly, and he took very much to the new religion. He granted the land around Abernethy to Brigid's favourite pupil Darludach, who was on a Christian mission to the Picts and Britons at the time. Darludach became the second abbess of Kildare when St. Brigid died around 500 A.D.

The 10th century round tower of the Abernethy Celtic church, where many of the Pictish Chronicles and other important documents relating to the Picts and Scots were written, still stands to this day, as does its twin tower in Kildare, Ireland. The only other round tower in Scotland, dating from around the period of the Celtic Church, is in Brechin, Angus.

At the foot of the Abernethy tower is a fine example of an early pre-Christian Pictish carved stone, badly damaged but still fascinating. On it can be seen a hammer, an anvil, part of a 'Crescent and V rod' symbol, and an enigmatic object, called by some a tuning fork, but believed by several archaeologists to be a representation of a burial chamber. There is also a

fine set of iron 'Jougs' (probably from an old French word, Joug, a yoke) hanging on the wall where those proven guilty of some misdemeanour or other would have found themselves secured by having one of these iron collars clamped around their throat. This old Scottish form of pillory doesn't date from the time of the Picts however, but is of post-reformation date and belongs to an age when our Scottish fore-fathers believed that public opprobrium was enough to cause a person to desist from their evil ways. Doubtless the Pictish kings had their own slightly more direct methods of dealing with miscreants, malefactors and other sorts of malcontents. ("Put him in the Jougs you say? Aye right! He should be so lucky".)

Stairs within the tower, which is 72 feet (22 metres) in height, allow access to the roof, thereby giving the visitor excellent panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The big iron key that opens the door to the tower is kept in the nearby tea-room. (It is called the '*Pitblae*'-a truly Pictish name if ever there was one). Be prepared for a wee surprise, however, when you attempt to open the lock. Upon your first efforts to do so, you may be reminded that this splendid tower was built according to Irish specifications.

27) - 37) Inclusive

On these kings we have almost no information whatsoever, except that one of the kings called Drust sent his daughter Dusticc to be educated by Mugint, the abbot of Whithorn in Galloway.

W.A. Cummins, in his influential work, "The Age of the Picts", (1995) suggests that the name Drust or Drostan may be cognate with the Welsh name Tristan, from *trystau*, meaning thunder. He posits that the well known Pictish symbol of the double disc and Z rod may represent thunder and lightning, as the double disc could be a depiction of clashing cymbals, and the Z rod a bolt of forked lightning. Certainly, at Trusty's hill fort in Galloway (see No.24), this symbol is carved near the fort's entrance.

Regarding the name 'Gurum', an interesting tradition of the Graham Clan is that their progenitor was a Caledonian chieftain called 'Greme' or 'Girim' who, according to legend, was the first Pict to breach the Roman Antonine Wall. This wall, built in 142 A.D., crossed Scotland for a remarkable 37 miles from Old Kilpatrick in the West to Bridgeness in the East. Is it possible that Gurum, the father of Drust, (Nos.29 and 31) Garthnac (No.32) and Cailtran (No.33) was a descendant of this man? Gurum is a very old word whose interpretation we can only guess at. There is, however, an obsolete Gaelic word '*Griom*', meaning 'War' and 'Battle', so can we speculate that 'Gurum' might possibly be understood to signify 'The Warrior'?

On the old maps of Scotland, Antonine's Wall is named as Grim's, or Graham's, Dyke, in honour of this hero.

38) **Brude** son of **Mailcon**

A strong and powerful leader, this king, also known as Brude Mac Maelchon, was almost certainly the son of Maelgwn, the famous king of Gwynedd in North Wales. Maelgwn, whose name means the 'white stone', was a great patron of the arts and more can be found out about him in the writings of St. Gildas, a 6th century monk from the west of Britain. We do not know the name of Brude's Pictish mother.

Brude united the Northern and Southern Picts and repelled an invasion of Scots from Dalriada (Argyll) in 560 A.D.

He adopted the Christian faith and was baptised by St. Columba in 565 A.D. near Inverness. The story is fully told in "The Life of Saint Columba", a hagiography written in the 7th century by St. Adamnan, the ninth abbot of Iona. Also included are accounts of how St. Columba bested Brude's chief druid Broichan in a contest of Christian versus pagan magic, and of how he drove off a monster that was lurking in the depths of the River Ness. Note that it was recorded as being by the River Ness that the event took place, and not Loch Ness, as is often supposed. This monster (whatever it was) wasn't benign by any manner or means and could probably best be described as a beast with attitude. It had already killed one of the local inhabitants, "the barbarous heathens," as Adamnan called them, by giving him a nasty bite, and was all for having a second helping of human flesh, only this time from one of Columba's companions, when 'the blessed man' intervened. Part of the text, translated in 1856 by Dr. W. Reeves, Canon of Armagh, is given below.

'But the monster, which, so far from being satiated, was only roused for more prey, was lying at the bottom of the stream, and when it felt the water disturbed above by the man swimming, suddenly rushed out, and, giving an awful roar, darted after him with its mouth wide open, as the man swam in the middle of the stream. Then the blessed man observing this, raised his holy hand, while all the rest, brethren as well as strangers, were stupefied with terror, and, invoking the name of God, formed the saving sign of the cross in the air, and commanded the ferocious monster saying, "Thou shalt go no further, nor touch the man; go back with all speed." Then at the voice of the saint, the monster was terrified, and fled more quickly than if it had been pulled back with ropes.'

Scotland, and in particular the Highlands, is full of stories about water dwelling monsters similar to this one, which are better known as 'Kelpies' or 'Water Horses'. The Gaelic word is *'Each Uisge'*. It is more than probable that the Picts had their own tales about them and there is a good likelihood that many of the tales told in the Highlands today have sprung from indigenous Pictish folklore.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that a great many of the Pictish carved stones portray a strange creature which nobody has as yet been able to identify. It has been given the eponymous nick-name of 'The Beastie' by enthusiasts of these carved stones, for it bears no resemblance to any known animal, either living or dead. Its head somewhat resembles a duck, and its 'legs' appear to be some kind of rounded fins or flippers. It has a mane and a tail, and its eyes, depending on which particular stone you are examining, vary from round to oval shaped, and can put you in

mind of everything from a lizard to a porpoise. Every flowing aspect of the 'Beastie' gives one the impression of its being an aquatic animal.

If this monster ever existed beyond the confines of fertile imaginations and carved stones then it's hardly surprising that the Romans didn't linger long in the land of the Caledonians.

Adamnan, throughout his biography of St. Columba, gives us a whole lot of information similar to that contained in this story about the monster in the river Ness. He even tells us the name of the lucky man whose life was saved from the monster. It was a certain Lugne Mocumin. What a pity space couldn't be found to tell us a little more about the Picts themselves. We should love to have known what sort of houses they lived in and the colour of the clothes they wore. What kind of folk tales did they tell one another while sitting round their cosy fireside hearths and what were their songs about? We shall never know. Even knowing the colour of Brude's hair would be something worth having.

Brude, son of Mailcon, ruled for 30 years. He died in 584 A.D. supposedly in the battle of '*Sreith*' (Strathmore?) in '*Circin*' (Angus).

39) **Gartnait** son of **Domnach**

This king had it pretty tough. Throughout his reign of 11 years (some scribes say 20), he was battling constantly with Aedan Mac Gabhran, King of the Dalriadan Scots who, with his four (some say five) sons, never ceased attacking Gartnait's kingdom. It is possible that Gartnait fell under Aedan's sword as Aedan is reported in the 11th century document "*Scelo Cano Meic Gartnain*" to have killed a certain Gartnan with whom he had been at war.

The names Gartnait and Gartnan look similar enough for us to conclude that they were for one and the same person; King Gartnait, son of Domnach.

40) **Nechtán**, grandson or nephew of **Uerb**

This king is credited with establishing a church at Abernethy. It is likely that he has been confused with Nechtán Morbet son of Irb (No.26), as the king lists become very complex at this point and the various Chronicles are often at odds with one another as to who was ruling what, where and when, and for how long.

41) **Cinioch** son of **Lutrin**

Nothing is known of this king and nothing is known of his father Lutrin. Cinioch is an early form of the name Kenneth, generally held to be a Scottish name, so he may have been of Dalriadan origin.

42) – 44) **Gartnait, Brude** and **Talorg**, all sons of **Uuid**

These three kings, all brothers, are also recorded in the king lists under other names. Respectively: Nechtán son of Fochle, Brude son of Fochle, and Tolarg son of Fethar.

The name Nechtan, often spelt Naiton, can be found in the second syllable of the name Gartnait. The name Uuid would probably have been pronounced 'Fid', (hence Fethar), and may be from the same root as Fidach, the wood dwelling son or clan of Cruithne. The Gaelic word for wood is '*fiodh*', but it may be worth pointing out that Uuid or Fid may equally derive from the word '*fiadh*', meaning a deer. The Picts often portrayed deer on their carved stones. This is, of course, mere speculation. We have no information on these kings.

45) **Talargan** son of **Anfrud**

Talargan came to the throne in 653 A.D. He led the Picts to victory in a battle against the Scots at Strath Ethairt the next year, and this seems to have brought about a breathing space, as there was a lasting peace and no major skirmishes between these two peoples for several decades. Talargan died in 657 A.D. No sooner had he died than the English, under their King Oswy (he was Talargan's uncle), '*subdued and made tributary*' most of Southern Pictland. This subjugation was to last for almost 30 years.

46) **Gartnait** son of **Donnel**

Gartnait took over kingship around 657 A.D. in the part of Pictland that was not under the control of the English King Oswy. He died in 663 A.D. His father is believed to have been Donnel Brecc (freckled Donald), the famous king of Dalriada who was killed in a battle with the Britons of Strathclyde in 642 A.D.

47) **Drust** son of **Donnel**

Drust, Gartnait's brother, was crowned in 664 A.D. the very same year that the infamous 'Synod of Whitby' took place. This was the scene of the great debate about the correct dating of Easter, and the attempt (ultimately successful), by the Roman church to assert its ascendancy over the Celtic church.

It was during this acrimonious debate that Wilfred, the Roman envoy, who was obviously not a man to mince his words said:

"The only people stupid enough to be in disagreement with the whole world are those Scots and their obstinate allies the Picts and the Britons who live on two islands at the ends of the ocean."

Oswy, the Northumbrian king, who up until then had preferred the Celtic church, came down in favour of the Roman faction, and Pictish blood began to boil. King Oswy died in 672 A.D. and was succeeded by King Ecgfrith who immediately sought to bring the Picts more directly under his control.

Drust led a rising against Ecgfrith in around 672 A.D, "*determined to free themselves forever from subjection to the Saxons*", according to Eddius Stephanus in his "Life of Wilfred". The Picts suffered a terrible slaughter, and Eddius recorded that two rivers were so filled with Pictish dead that the English were able to cross over dry-shod to pursue the

fugitives. The Picts were then, according to Eddius, “*reduced to slavery and remained subject under the yoke of captivity*”.

Shortly afterwards, King Drust was banished from the land of the Picts. He died around 677 A.D., probably from a broken heart. It is not recorded whether it was the English or his own people that had expelled him.

48) **Brude** son of **Bile**

Usually called Brude Mac Bile, this king, believed to have been the son of a king of Strathclyde, must surely rank alongside Robert the Bruce as one of Scotland’s most capable commanders and patriotic leaders. Like King Robert six centuries later, upon ascending the throne Brude immediately set out to bring his kingdom firmly under his control. His first task was to bring the troublesome sub-kings of Pictland to heel.

Advancing northwards with a force of trusted veterans he tackled one rebellious stronghold after another. In 681 A.D. he besieged and overthrew the mighty fortress of Dunottar on the eastern seaboard. By 682 A.D. he had equipped a navy of such strength that he was able to sail north and lay waste the insubordinate Orkney Isles. One year later he completed his hat-trick by attacking and subduing the Scots’ Dalriadan capital of Dunadd. Brude had, in a few masterful years, secured his northern, eastern and western boundaries. He now looked to the south. The year was 685 A.D.

The English King Ecgfrith had marched into Pictland with a thundering army of cavalry and infantry in order to further subjugate the Picts and force the Roman church upon them as the state religion. As we have already seen, the Picts preferred the teachings and form of the Celtic church. Unluckily for Ecgfrith, King Brude Mac Bile, unlike his predecessor Drust, was a brilliant tactician. Using his knowledge of local terrain, the English were lured into a mire where their whole army, along with its king and his personal bodyguard, was routed and utterly destroyed in a furious orgy of bloody revenge and unleashed nationalist rage at Dunnichen Hill in Angus. Only a few survivors managed to struggle back to England where their dire news and story of the battle was listened to by a numbed and shocked populace.

In England, this battle became known as Nechtansmere. Among the Britons, who, in consequence of the Pictish victory were at last able to reclaim their own independence, it became known as ‘*Gueith Lin Garan*’, the Battle of the Heron Pool. Among the Scots it became known as ‘*Cath Duin Neachtain*’, the Battle of Dun Nechtan. Nechtan’s fort, which was shamefully quarried away in the 19th century for building material, stood nearby. Regrettably, we do not know what the Picts themselves called the battle.

The clash was well documented by contemporary Irish and English scribes, and we are generously informed that the engagement took place at around 3 p.m. on Saturday 20th of May, 685 A.D. This is a date that should surely be taught to, and memorised by, every Scottish school child together with that of Bannockburn in 1314, for it is likely that without the Pictish victory at Dunnichen Hill, the Nation of Scotland would never have come about, and our world would be a very different place.

It was recorded that Ecgfrith was given a royal burial by the Picts on 'St. Columba's Isle,' which was either Iona, on the west coast of Scotland, a journey of several days duration, or, much more likely in the circumstances, Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth, just a day or so away from Dunnichen Hill.

No matter where King Ecgfrith was buried however, his royal inhumation shows that the Picts were obviously magnanimous in victory; a sure sign of a highly civilised people. Brude died in 693 A.D. and was buried on the sacred Isle of Iona, sorely lamented by his kinsmen. St. Adamnan, Columba's biographer, was reportedly much affected by Brude's death and is reported, in a very ancient Irish document called the 'Life of St. Adamnan', to have made this short statement;

<p><i>"Mor do inganta do ni In ri genair o Muire Betha scuab an im muili Ecc do Bruide mac Bile Is annamh Iar mbeith ir righe tuaithe Ceppan caue crin dara covers Im mac rig Ala Cluaiti".</i></p>	<p>"Many wonders He performs The King who was born of Mary He takes away life Death of Brude son of Bile It is strange (or, it is a desolation) That after ruling in the north A withered hollow oaken stick The son of the king of Alcluath."</p>
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(The 'withered hollow oaken stick' is Brude's wooden coffin)

This same document tells a very unusual tale about how Adamnan attempted to bring Brude back to life, and that, just as Brude's body began to move and his eyes began to open, 'a certain pious man came to the door of the house and said, "If Adamnan's object be to raise the dead, I say he should not do so, for it will be a degradation to every Cleric who shall succeed to his place, if he too cannot raise the dead." Adamnan agreed and said, "Therefore let us give our blessing to the body and the soul of Brude." Then Brude resigned his spirit to Heaven again, with the blessing of Adamnan and the congregation of Iona.'

An Irish cleric, Riaguil of Bennchor, was in Pictland at the time of the battle, and wrote the following lines which are preserved in the Annals of MacFirbis, the celebrated Irish '*seanachaidh*,' or 'keeper of records.' The Old Irish here is very difficult to translate with accuracy.

*"Iniu feras Bruide cath, in forba a senathar,
Manad algas la mac De, conide ad genathar
Iniu ro bith mac Ossa a ccath fria claidhme glasa
Cia do rada aitrige, is hi ind hi iar nassa.
Iniu ro bith mac Ossa, las ambidis duba deoga
Ro cuala Crist ar n-guidhe roisaorbut Bruide bregha".*

"This day Brude fights a battle
For the heritage of his grandfather,
Unless the Son of God wills it otherwise,
He will die in it.

This day the son of Oswy (i.e. Ecgfrith) has been struck down
In a battle against blue swords,
Although he has spoken penitence,
It is penitence too late.

This day the son of Oswy, he who drank the black ale,
Has been struck down.
Christ heard our supplications,
They spared Brude the brave.”

A Pictish carved stone, which is believed to commemorate the battle of Dunnichen Hill, can be seen in Aberlemno village churchyard in Angus. It is a truly outstanding piece of Pictish art, showing on the one side horsemen and infantrymen engaged in battle, and, on the other, a huge highly decorated Celtic cross, surrounded by various fantastic animals, including a pair of stylised sea horses complete with fins and hooves. It is a shame that in view of its importance it is being allowed to weather away out of doors except for a period during the winter when it is enclosed. Scotland now has its own Parliament. Let us hope and pray that it will give some assistance to help conserve monuments such as these to protect the Nation’s culture.

49) **Taran** son of **Entifidich**

Taran succeeded Brude son of Bile in 693 A.D. He appears to have been unpopular as he was banished only four years later, and had to make his way to Ireland where he found sanctuary. In all likelihood the Picts regarded him as weak in their dealings with the English.

In other words, like John Baliol 600 years later, he was deemed to be a ‘Toom Tabard’ (empty coat), and judged unfit to be a King.

50) **Brude** son of **Derili (Brude Mac Derile)**

The English attempted another invasion in 698 A.D. and were again soundly beaten. As with Ecgfrith, an English sub-king, Bertred son of Bernith was slain. Unfortunately, it was not recorded where this battle took place, nor what it was called.

Brude Mac Derile is also remembered for ratifying St. Adamnan’s “Law of the Innocents”, which protected women, children and the clergy from the horrors of war. A sure indication again that the Picts were a civilised people. Brude died in 706 A.D. to be succeeded by his brother, Nechtan. Nobody could possibly have imagined at the time, the bloody chaos that this new king’s religious opinions were about to bring to the land of his forefathers.

51) **Nechtán** son of **Derili (Nechtán Mac Derile)**

Most of what we have on King Nechtán comes from the pen of ‘The Venerable Bede’, (673 – 735 A.D.) a monk at Jarrow in Northumberland who wrote “The Ecclesiastical History of the English People” in 731 A.D. In it we are told that Nechtán preferred the Roman religion to that of the

Celtic church. Nechtan believed that the Roman church had the rights of it with regard to the dating of Easter, and wrote to Ceolfrid, abbot of Jarrow, in 710 A.D. asking for details in order that he could introduce their system to his people. Following Ceolfrid's reply, he sent out a decree to all the churches in Pictland demanding that they accept the Roman method for calculating Easter. This is the system that we use today. He also instructed the clergy to have their hair tonsured in the Roman style and had a new church built using English architects to ensure that it was built according to Roman convention and conformity.

It has been suggested that Restenneth Priory near Forfar was the church that was built to this decree but it is now believed that the Priory is of a much later date, possibly 10th -11th.century. The entrance doorway resembles that of the round tower in Abernethy, itself a construction believed to date from this period, so perhaps the same team of masons were employed in the creation of the two buildings.

Nechtán's intrigue with England's higher clergy began deepening around 715 A.D. What was he up to? The Picts had, unfortunately, suffered a sore defeat in a battle with the English at a place called the Plain of Manau, possibly near Grangemouth, only four years earlier. Was Nechtan a pragmatist who believed in peace at any cost and reckoned that if you couldn't beat the English, you should join them? The Celtic church changed over to the Roman system for dating Easter in 716 A.D., yet despite this, Nechtan still expelled the 'family of Iona' across 'the spine of Britain' the very next year, 717 A.D.

This inclination to Rome instead of the traditional Western orientation towards Iona would doubtless be seen by many Picts as a move towards English control, and Nechtan would, whether he liked it or not, be perceived as a treacherous Anglophile who would have to be removed. He was, however, a strong king and maintained a firm grip on his subjects until 724 A.D., when he gave up his crown and retired to the church. It is possible he had been 'advised' to abdicate.

The discontent that had been simmering below the surface now erupted into five years of some of the most bitter and bloody internecine religio-political civil warfare that this country has ever seen. Nechtan himself came out of retirement briefly and took part for nine anarchic months before being flung into prison in 726 A.D. by Drust son of Talorgen (No.57). Drust was himself ousted by Alpin son of Engus (See Nos.56 & 57) the same year. At this point the lists become somewhat chaotic and it is difficult to tell who was in charge at any one time and for how long. Alpin was defeated in a battle at Moncrieff near Perth by Oengus son of Uurguist (No.58) in 728 A.D. Nechtan, now somehow free from prison, gathered together an army and also took on Alpin at a place called Castle Credi, crushing him completely. The Annals of Tighernac, compiled in the early 11th. century from much older documents, tell us that, "victory went against Alpin, and his territories and all his men were taken in a wretched battle". Nechtan in turn was challenged by Oengus son of Uurguist, and suffered a humiliating defeat at the Cairn o' Mount pass in 729 A.D.

These civil war battles took place at sea as well as on land and were often massive in scale. We can get some idea of their size from this extract, again from the Annals of Tighernac.

“Kl. 729. Tri. L. long Piccardach do brisidh irrois Cuissine sa bliadhna cetna”.

“729 A.D. Three times fifty ships of the Picts were destroyed on the Ross of Cuissine this year”.

One hundred and fifty ships! Can it really have been so many? Remember that in the 8th-century roads were practically non-existent and the easiest way of getting around Scotland was by sea and river. Neither should the reader make the mistake of believing these ships to have been small hide covered currachs, similar to the one in which St. Columba with his twelve attendants arrived on Iona in 563 A.D. These vessels, similar to Viking Longships, were of sturdy wooden construction, fitted with tall masts and wide, spreading, canvas sails. Hulls were held together with strong iron bolts. Scotland was covered in huge swathes of forest in the 8th-century and wood was in plentiful supply. Again in the Annals of Tighernac we are told, (in an odd mixture of Latin and Gaelic in the original), that;

“In the year 737 A.D. Failbhe MacGuaire, the successor of Maelrubha (the Red Priest) in Apurcrossan (Applecross) was drowned in the open sea with all his sailors, to the number of twenty-two”.

This ship had at least 23 persons on board, and 22 of them were sailors, possibly oarsmen. It is to be presumed that Failbhe MacGuaire had brought several of his belongings with him, as we are told that they were all drowned in the open sea, that is, he was on mission duty, so this must have been a craft of substantial size.

Yet again, this time in the ‘Historia Britonum,’ we are informed that one Pictish fleet of nine ships carried 309 persons. In other words, about 35 per ship. So it’s probably fair to suggest that the 150 ships sunk on the Ross of Cuissine (an ancient place-name which, unfortunately, has never been identified) had a total complement of between three thousand and four thousand men. It’s hard to imagine the bursting timbers and the screams and yells of the sailors as they struggled to stay alive. It must have been awful. We aren’t informed as to which king, or kings, these ships belonged but 729 A.D. was the same year that Nechtan was forced to capitulate to Oengus son of Uurguist, so it’s a fair bet that it was Nechtan’s fleet that was sunk.

Nechtán retired to the church once more and died peacefully in 732 A.D., probably a very saddened man. Why did he lean so much towards England and its Roman orthodoxy? Did he believe the Scots of Dalriada were more of a threat to Pictland than were the English? Remember, it was only around thirty years since the battle of Dunnichen Hill, when Ecgfrith and his Roman religion had been so firmly rejected. Now, barely a generation later, Nechtán was asking for advice from an English abbot on Roman church habit and customs.

There must have been much more to it than the mere question of the correct dating of Easter. Had he been promised a cushy after-life by the Church of Rome if he agreed to the expulsion of the Celtic Church?

Was money at the back of it? Was a woman involved? An unusual and ancient tale called ‘The Legend of Triduana’, properly ‘*Tri di h-Aoine*’, which means ‘the three days fasting’, informs us that Nechtan had a lover of this name who is believed to have been an abbess attached to the group of advisors dispatched to Pictland by Ceolfrid. Perhaps it was as simple as that, for it wouldn’t be the first time that an ancient kingdom had been torn asunder over a king’s infatuation with a beautiful woman.

Forthcoming centuries would also show that neither would it be the last time.

It is doubtful if we will ever know why Nechtan behaved as he did, for he took his reasons with him to the grave, though the truth is probably a combination of all of these mentioned above. How ironic it would be if he ended up in a Celtic heaven instead of a Roman one.

52) – 57) **Carnach** son of **Ferach**, **Oengus** son of **Uurguist**, **Nechtán** son of **Derili**, **Oengus** son of **Brude**, **Alpin** son of **Engus**, and **Drust** son of **Talorgen**.

What a mixer-maxter of kings there was during the period of civil war. One military coup followed hard upon the heels of another as each king tried to gain the upper hand during the conflict. One wonders what the average Pict, trying to scratch a living from his small patch of land, would have made of it all.

Carnach son of Ferach is reported as having ruled for 24 years, yet we seem to have no other information regarding his reign. It is likely that he was a sub-king tucked away somewhere in the far north of Scotland; content to be a wee fish in a big stormy pond and keeping his head well below the surface. Who could blame him?

58) **Oengus** son of **Uurguist**

King Oengus was ruthless and as hard as they come. One king after another had come and gone since Nechtan son of Derili, and no one seemed to be able to get a grip of the situation in this theatre of civil war. On to the blood-soaked stage strode Oengus, “the tyrannical murderer who, from the beginning to the end of his reign, persisted in the performance of bloody crime”, according to Bede.

Oengus took control amid the general chaos and disorder by employing the simple expediency, as he no doubt saw it, of drowning his enemies in a large tank filled with water. In one case, according to the Annals of Tighernac, the victim being a certain Talorgan son of Congus in 734 A.D. and in another case, this time in 739 A.D. a prince called Talorgan, son of Drostan, the king of Atholl. (Did Oengus have something against people named Talorgan? It’s not likely. He had however, as we shall see, a brother of that name with whom he may not have been best pleased). A nice illustration of what appears to have been one of these terminal exercises in fluid dynamics being carried out is shown on a Pictish carved stone in the garden of Glamis manse in Angus. Carved on the left-hand side of the stone two pairs of legs are clearly seen protruding from the top of a capacious cauldron. Immediately beneath this is a depiction of two men battling it out with axes. Dare we ask – one lump or two?

Once Oengus had gained overall control, he turned his face towards Dalriada. He invaded in 734 and again in 736 A.D. when he “laid the country waste”, and captured the huge fortress of Dunadd, capital of the Scots. In a little under ten years he had conquered the whole of Scotland North of the Forth and Clyde. The carving of a Pictish boar on the summit of Dunadd may have been the responsibility of Oengus, and we may surmise the message implied by this carved graffiti: *“Picts rule, and don’t you forget it!”*

Oengus then took on the Britons in a battle in 750 A.D. at a place called Mocetauc, believed to be Mugdock near Milngavie. This time, however, he lost. To his apparent dismay, his brother Talorgan, believed by some authorities to have been fighting on the side of the Britons, was killed.

Somewhat chastened, Oengus retreated to his capital at Forteviot in Perthshire to lick his wounds, and remained there as king of the Picts until his death eleven years later in 761 A.D. He had ruled for thirty long years. As well as stabilising the country after years of civil war, he was able to take on the Scots in Dalriada and remind them who really was the boss. Quite an achievement.

(One suspects there were a few nervous glances in his palace, however, whenever his servants were told to get a bath ready!)

59) **Brude** son of **Uurguist**

A brother of Oengus, he ruled for only two years.

60) **Engus** son of **Brude**

This king is likely to be a scribe’s confused combination of the reigns of Oengus son of Uurguist (No.58) and Brude son of Uurguist (No.59) who were brothers. We have no information on this king apart from the length of his reign, 36 years, which is similar to the 32 years duration of the reigns of Oengus (No.58) and Brude (No.59).

(Remember that the king lists were taken down from oral tradition, and mistakes would certainly occur due to imperfect recollection.)

61) **Brude** son of **Engus**

Presumably confusion with King Brude (No.59) above. However it may be a reference to a son of Oengus, son of Uurguist (No.58) called Brude who was killed in the siege of Dunadd in 736 A.D. Oengus was reportedly devastated by this loss.

62) **Alpin** son of **Engus**

This is the same king (No.56) who was defeated by Necton son of Derili at Castle Credi during the civil war. His position here is an error in the original king list, and is quite misplaced.

63) **Ciniod** son of **Wredech**

During Ciniod's reign, the Scots of Dalriada re-established their independence under their leader Aed Find by defeating the Picts in a fierce battle in 768 A.D. in the province of Fortriu (Southern Perthshire). Aed Find was the son of Echdach, King of Dalriada, who died in 778 A.D. and Aed is believed to have been the paternal grandfather of Kenneth Mac Alpin, the future King of the Picts and Scots who was crowned in 843 A.D. Upon regaining their freedom, the Scots threw out the Pictish laws of Oengus son of Uurguist, and substituted them with the 'Laws of Aed'.

Ciniod died in 775 A.D.

64) and 65) **Elpin** son of **Wroid** and **Drust** son of **Talorgen**

Both of these kings reigned within a very short period of time; approximately four years in total. The only things we know about them are their names.

66) **Talorgan** son of **Drustan**

This is probably the same king who was called '*Dubthalog*', i.e. Black Talorgan in the Irish Annals of Ulster. He reigned for four or five years, and is recorded as 'A king of the Picts on this side of the Mounth'. He died in 782 A.D.

The adjective '*dubh*' normally means black. However, when it precedes a noun or name instead of following it, as is more usually the case in Gaelic, it can also mean sad, mournful, gloomy or wicked. Hence the 'black' in regard to Talorgan is more likely to have been an indication of a dark personality rather than the colour of his hair. To put it another way, his nick-name was 'Talorgan the Surly'.

67) **Talorgan** son of **Engus**

Depending on which scribe you believe, this king reigned for either, two and a half, five, or twelve and a half years. His father, Engus, may have been the same Oengus son of Uurguist (No.58) who took command during the civil war. If this is indeed a case of a son following his father onto the throne, it suggests that the matrilinear system of choosing a king was beginning to break down.

68) **Canaul** son of **Tarl'a**

Civil war had again broken out among the Picts, and King Canaul, son of Tarl'a, according to the Irish annalists, was defeated in a battle with Constantin son of Wrguist (No.69) in 789 A.D. Probably trying to strengthen his position, Canaul invaded Dalriada in 807 A.D., only to be killed by Conall Mac Aedan, leader of the Dalriadans.

Canaul son of Tarl'a, although described as a Pictish king in the oldest lists, i.e. those written in the 10th century, was probably not a king as such, but a sub-king who was chancing his luck with the big boys like Constantin. He shouldn't have bothered. He just ended up dead!

69) **Constantin** son of **Wrguist**

Constantin, unlike his hapless predecessor, was a true Pictish king, and had come to the throne sometime around 780 A.D. Information on him is quite scanty, but we know that he defeated Conall Mac Aedan in 809 A.D. and ruled over the whole of Scotland, **including** Dalriada. He was the first king who not only united the Picts and Scots, but was recognised by the Scots as their '*Ard Righ*' – their High King.

Constantin is also remembered for having founded a church at Dunkeld in Perthshire. He died in 820 A.D.

The Dupplin Cross, a 9th century monument long believed to have been raised to his memory, can be seen in St. Serf's church in Dunning in Perthshire. Using laser technology, seven lines of script were discovered on what was previously thought to have been a blank panel on the cross. Their message, almost indecipherable, confirmed that the cross was indeed dedicated to the memory of Constantin. It reads; CU(...)NTIN / FILIUS FIRCUS / S. (Constantine son of Fergus).

It is unfortunate, in a way, that the text is written in Latin. Shall we ever find anything written in Pictish that we can actually read? The Pictish Ogam inscribed around the edge of the rectangular base of the cross is impossible to decipher due to the effects of Scotland's weather, the trampling of feet and the hooves of cattle, when it stood upon a rainswept hillside for centuries upon centuries. It is so infuriatingly frustrating! Yet it is somewhat gratifying to know that many other inscriptions, perhaps similar to this one, may still be lying out there somewhere, waiting to be discovered, on Scotland's carved stones.

70) **Unnuist** son of **Wrguist**

Brother of Constantin (No.69), and known to us today as Angus son of Fergus, this devoutly Christian king left an indelible mark on the pages of Scotland's story. A deeply religious man, he is believed, according to legend, to have brought the relics of Saint Andrew to Kilrymont, the ancient name for St. Andrews in Fife. However, a certain Greek monk by the name of St. Regulus is usually credited with this. He is supposed to have brought the relics with him from Constantinople in the 8th century. Whatever the truth of the matter, King Angus established St. Andrews, which had previously been of relatively minor religious importance, as a principal seat of religious learning among the Picts.

Regarding the defence of the realm, Angus, in 832 A.D., like almost every king in Scotland's history, was faced with the task of repelling an English invasion. This particular onslaught was being planned by a ruler called Athelstan, an English warlord who was gathering an army on 'The Plain of Merc', probably Mercia, near the River Tyne. (We can almost hear Angus sighing, "Here we go again! Will they never leave us alone?")

The legend goes that, after praying fervently for some days before the battle, St. Andrew appeared to Angus in a dream and promised him victory if he dedicated a tenth part of his inheritance to God. On the day of the engagement, believed to have taken place at Athelstaneford in East Lothian, Angus and his army arose to be greeted by the spectacular sight

of coruscating white clouds forming a huge St. Andrews cross which gleamed blindingly against the azure blue of the morning sky. How their hearts must have lifted at that sight. From Angus' combined force of Picts and Scots the cry went up, "For God and Saint Andrew!" (in their own languages of course) and with a great cheer, they drew their swords and charged the Saxons, slaughtering them to a man. The English king's head was impaled on a stake and planted on an island, probably Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth, and no doubt facing South.

We note that this English king wasn't given the same sort of respect as that accorded to King Egfrith 147 years earlier when he was interred by the Picts after the battle of Dunnichen Hill. We have no idea as to why that should be. It somehow doesn't tie in with what we have learned about Angus' character. Was it because this Athelstan may not have been a 'bona fide' English king?

It is unclear who the English war leader was that died in this battle. Some say Athelstan (possibly meaning the Noble Stone), but he did not reign until the early 10th century. An alternative version of the story of the Saltire gives the credit to another 'Angus,' Oengus son of Uurguist (No.58), who is supposed to have defeated an English army under the command of Athelstane, a general of King Eadbert of Northumbria around 750 A.D.

The confusion may have derived from the place name Athelstaneford, which appears to be a tautology of the Gaelic words '*Ath Ail*', meaning the stone ford, and their equivalent in English. The battle may therefore have been named after its location, as Bannockburn was, rather than an English king.

Legends are notoriously slack on details, but it is a fact that around this time St. Andrew became the Patron Saint of Scotland, (replacing St. Columba) and the blue and white saltire became our National Flag.

In consequence of this early date, Scotland's is the oldest National Flag in the world. Just think about that! (If you are Scottish you may be allowed a wee smug smile.)

71) and 72) **Drust** son of **Constantin** and **Talorgen** son of **Wthoil**

These kings are reported to have ruled Pictland together for four years. The patrilinear method seems to be taking over now, and it may be that Drust son of Constantin was deemed too young to rule alone. Talorgen son of Wthoil may, then, have been more of a National Guardian, or Regent, than an actual King.

73) **Uuen** son of **Unuist**

We do not have much information on King Uuen. His reign lasted only around three years, but he appears to have been a good enough patriot and managed to co-ordinate and organise a joint force of Picts and Scots in an attempt to repulse an army of invading Norsemen.

Unfortunately, Uuen, together with his brother Bran and a sub-king from Dalriada called Aed were slain along with their combined army “*in numbers beyond counting*”. This disaster took place in 839 A.D., somewhere in Strathearn.

74) **Ferach** son of **Bacoc**

Ferach took over the kingdom when Uuen was killed in 839 A.D. He ruled for three years.

75) **Brude** son of **Ferach**

After his father Ferach was either killed or deposed, Brude reigned for either one month or one year. It is unclear which.

76) **Kineth** son of **Ferach**

Kineth also reigned for only one year. It is likely that he ruled jointly with his brother, Brude.

77) **Brude** son of **Fokel**

Ruled for two years.

These four kings, (Nos. 74 to 77), are unlikely to have ruled consecutively. Pictland was in a state of considerable turmoil during this period, and they may have been ruling and defending different parts of the kingdom at the same time, fighting the invading Norsemen as well as the Scots, ever looking to expand from Dalriada.

78) **Drust** son of **Ferach**. Died circa 842 A.D.

Following the death of King Uuen son of Unuist, (No. 73), the Pictish kingdom began to suffer the most terrible onslaughts imaginable from both land and sea. Norse incursions were becoming increasingly frequent and savage, and the pressing task of uniting the country and organising its government fell to Drust son of Ferach. A man can only take so much, and we can only guess at what was going on in Drust's head. His country was under siege and he had lost his father Ferach and his two brothers Brude and Kineth in the space of only a few years. Needing friends desperately, he turned to the Scots of Dalriada, just as King Uuen son of Unuist had done previously in 839 A.D.

A joint council was urgently called. In an Irish document called the ‘*Braflang Scoine*’ (The Pitfall of Scone), we read that Drust and his nobles were invited to a feast at Scone where they were treacherously murdered. The story goes that, while the Picts sat at table drinking, the Scots removed wooden pegs from under their benches, causing them to fall into traps set beneath them. Unable to defend themselves, the Pictish lords were systematically butchered to a man. The Prophecy of St. Berchan (11th cent.) alludes to this singular act of treachery in the following verse;

*“Is lais brectair thair na buirb
Tochlait talmhan, tren an chard
Brodlainn bodhbha, bas, n-airgne
For lar Scoine sciath-airde”.*

“ By him are deceived in the east the fierce ones
He shall dig in the earth, powerful the art
Dangerous goad blades, death, pillage
On the middle of Scone of high shields.”

As a tale of broken trust and betrayal, it must rank among the worst in our nation’s history, yet it may just be a fable, as the story had been used time after time in previous accounts to demonstrate a complete reversal of fortune. For example, in a similar story, Herodotus, (the ‘Father of History’, born circa 484 B.C.), tells us (Book 1.Ch.106) how the Medes overcame their Scythian overlords by inviting them to a banquet, there getting them drunk with wine before slaughtering them all.

Whether an ancient fable or not, it was at just about this time that Kenneth Mac Alpin made his grab for power. Two centuries of constant invasions and warfare had taken a dreadful toll. The Picts were leaderless and their people exhausted. Drust, son of Ferach, the last true Pictish king, was out of the way, probably murdered, and the Realm of the Picts was ripe for the plucking. A new King was coming.

79) **Cináed son of Alpin (Kenneth Mac Alpin)**

King Cináed, known to us today as Kenneth, ruled from 843 to 858 A.D. Everything about this man is an enigma. In the annals he comes across as ruthless, strong willed, daring, cultured and religious all rolled into one person. He is often claimed to be the first king of both Picts and Scots, but as we know, this is false as the Dalriadan Scots had accepted King Constantin (No.69) as their '*Ard-Righ*', or High King, thirty four years previously. Also, King Kenneth was not crowned as King of Scots, but as '*Rex Pictorum*', King of the Picts.

He is often claimed to be a Scot, but upon examination of his first name, Cináed (emphasis on the second syllable), we find that it is most probably Pictish and not Scottish, although frustratingly we cannot be sure what Cináed means. There is some similarity with the Gaelic name Coinneach and the Old Irish name Cainneach ('an amiable man'), but it is judged too slight to be more than coincidental. There was a Dalriadan Scots name, 'Aed', however, so as regards his Christian name at any rate it is unclear whether Kenneth's roots were Scots or Pictish. His father's name, Alpin, is unquestionably Pictish as it contains the letter 'P' and therefore cannot be of Q-Celtic origin, i.e. Scots or Irish Gaelic. It is quite similar to the Welsh name Elffin, and Welsh is of course of P-Celtic origin.

So was Kenneth a Pict or a Dalriadan Scot? The answer is probably a combination of both. It has been tentatively suggested that his paternal great-grandfather was Aed Find, King of Dalriada, who died around 778 A.D. (see Ciniod son of Wredech, No.63), and that his maternal grandfather was Constantin son of Wrguist (No.69) who died in 820 A.D. Unfortunately there is no conclusive proof and we simply cannot be sure of his ancestry, but there is a reasonable argument for his suggested dynastic lineage in that he gave one of his sons, Aed, a Dalriadan Scots name, and a Pictish one, Constantin, to the other. Here was a man who was proud of his joint heritage.

Being a descendant of the two royal houses of Pictland and Dalriada would make Kenneth Mac Alpin acceptable to both Picts and Scots, while having royal connections on both sides of the Scots/Pictish border would bring obvious advantages to each country. There would be cultural exchanges and a form of co-operation, never properly experienced before between the two peoples, would take place.

The oft recounted military overthrow of the Pictish kingdom, with its almost gleeful description of the subsequent wholesale genocide of the Pictish people, now appears to be just so much propaganda. Later Irish chroniclers appear on this occasion to have been more interested in establishing a fatuous Irish/Scots provenance for King Kenneth, with absolutely no compelling evidence at all, than they were with merely reporting the facts. Mac Alpin was able to unite the Scots and the Picts because he himself was a mixture of both royal houses, with a legitimate claim to either throne. He simply could not have accomplished this fusion without the co-operation of the Picts.

The situation in both Dalriada and Pictland had become critical as the two countries were suffering badly from unceasing attacks by Viking pirates. A strong leader was called for who had the ability and authority

to form a permanent coalition and who would command the respect of both nations. Mac Alpin was the obvious choice.

Starting with the Scots, Kenneth took a force of battle hardened warriors westward to claim the crown of the Dalriadans. They had been without a proper High King since 729 A.D. and over the next two years he established his own government and rule of law among them. He then turned East and proceeded to Perth, reportedly bringing the *Lia Fail*, the Scots' 'Stone of Destiny', with him from Dunstaffnage castle in Argyll to Scone, ancient capital of the Picts. He also brought the Holy relics of Saint Columba from Iona to the church of Dunkeld in Perthshire that had been founded by Constantin son of Uurguist (No.69). Kenneth was crowned in 843 A.D., probably at Scone

He did not have it all his own way of course, as there was some fierce resistance from several contumacious Pictish sub-kings who regarded him as an arrogant usurper. They would have to be dealt with before he could give his full attention to ousting the English from southern Scotland, which they had been overrunning for some years.

Yet deal with the obdurate sub-kings he did, and, with his base secure, he turned his combined army of Picts and Scots southwards to tackle the English. He burned Dunbar, captured Melrose and expelled the English from most of southern Scotland, extending his control as far south as the river Tweed. Consolidating his rule over the whole kingdom is reckoned to have taken around eight years to complete, but at the end of it all Mac Alpin had achieved more than any king of Scots or Picts before him.

Kenneth Mac Alpin was an extremely capable captain of men who not only won battle after battle but, like a latter day Caesar, appears to have been an accomplished politician besides, and it was in this field, more than any other, that his true genius showed. He took the copper that was the Picts and the tin that was the Scots, and forged them together into the hard burnished Bronze that was to eventually become the new Nation of Scotland: a nation and culture that has lasted through storm and tempest and every form of vicissitude for 1,200 years. Surely a remarkable achievement by any standard.

A 10th century fragment from the Irish Annals of Gillananaemh MacEgan, collected and transcribed in 1650 by Duald MacFirbis (the same admirable Irish seanachaidh who collected and preserved the poem on Brude son of Bile), carries the date of Kenneth Mac Alpin's death in Latin and a short eulogy in Irish.

'858 Kal(ends). Cionaodh macAilpin rex Pictorum moritur; conadh do ro raidheadh an rann.'
"Nad mair Cionaodh go lion sgor,
Fo dhera gol in gach taigh
Aon ri a logha fo nimh,
Go bruinne Romha ni bhfail."

‘Year 858. Kenneth Mac Alpin King of the Picts died;
on whom this verse was composed.’

“That Kenneth of the several steeds no longer lives
Is the cause of weeping in every house
One king of his renown under Heaven,
To the borders of Rome there is not.”

.....

With the death of King Kenneth Mac Alpin it could probably be argued that we have come to the end of the History of the Pictish Kings. History, at least as far as the Picts are concerned, had turned a new page, for after a period of adjustment that lasted a couple of generations, the ancient kingdom of Alba was to begin a process of fundamental change, both politically and culturally, that would eventually transform itself from being a fiercely independent Dark Age society with its own ancient customs and laws, into the modern Nation of Scotland that we know today.

What would have happened if the metaphorical dice that roll so randomly and seem to land unfairly on so many occasions had fallen another way? What language, or languages, might we speak in Scotland today? Imagine having a passport that described your country of origin as Pictland and was magnificently emblazoned with a Wild Boar and a Saltire on its front cover.

Frankly, I think I would like it.

EPILOGUE.

NON OMNIS MORIAR. (“I shall not wholly die.”) Horace.

‘King Drust of the Hundred Battles, Brude son of Bile, Oengus son of Uurguist, Constantin son of Wrguist and Kenneth son of Alpin.’

Wonderful names from Scotland’s heroic past. What men they were and what sights they must have seen and experienced. Sights that we can barely imagine today. Huge battles on sea and land with weapons like swords, spears and axes. Scenes of wanton destruction and the most awful acts of barbaric cruelty, all unquestionably played out against a background of exceptional personal courage and willing self-sacrifice. The Picts, we recall, lived in the world of the Warlord.

Yet was there not another side to their society? Of course there was. They had a vibrant and exciting culture. The music of their harps and triple pipes mixed freely with laughter and songs in great wooden halls where the mead flowed like water and the banquet on the table was a deer or a wild boar that had been killed with a hunter’s arrow just the day before. They were a people who truly loved life and who probably expected their way of living to last for ever.

What a proud inheritance and what a remarkable history they have left for us. Did these men (and of course women) think about the future and did they wish to be remembered? We must automatically assume that they did, for why else would they have set up such beautifully carved standing stones, which show all of the aforementioned scenes, throughout the whole of Pictland?

Which surely begs the question:

Do the Scots of today honour the memory of their Pictish and Dalriadan ancestors who sacrificed so much to defend their identity, and stands Kenneth Mac Alpin’s Scotland where it did?

Walter Bower, Abbot of Inchcolm and author of the ‘Scotichronicon’, writing in Latin in the 15th century and quoting from, it is believed, a much older chronicle, (though he does not give its provenance) describes the Scots’ enduring love of liberty:

“...going barefoot, undernourished and dressed in rags...or hair shirts with which they were roughly covered. And in all these misfortunes and hardships they could never be prevailed upon to submit to or obey a foreign king, but on the contrary, they were always obedient and loyal under their own kings’ rule and chose to lead no other life than this that was no better than the life of wild beasts, so long as they had their freedom.”

It is the opinion of this author that each and every Scot knows the answer to the question asked above, as it instinctively lies within himself. All he has to do is search for it and recognise it for what it is.

The End.

Appendix I – Where did they come from and what happened to them?

The question ‘Where did the Picts come from?’ isn’t an easy one to answer. Were they descendants of the original inhabitants of Scotland, the people who had been here since the Ice Age ended, as some D.N.A. research seems to show? (*q.v. appendix III*). The ancient Foundation Legends, however, seem quite definite in their opinion that the Picts and the Scots had come from somewhere in the East. Readers may be interested in the following piece of information that can be found in the book, “Kingdom of the Ark”, by Lorraine Evans. In her work, published in 2000, Ms. Evans, an Egyptologist, pursues and cultivates her persuasive view that ancient Egyptians came to settle in Britain, and in particular Scotland and Ireland, around 1350 B.C. The passage, given on page 249 of her book, is worth quoting in full.

“We are now left with one final enigma. Very high frequencies of O blood, similar to those found in much of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, are rarely encountered. Apart from a few islands in the Aegean Sea and pockets in the western Caucasus, Irwin Morgan-Watkins (Welsh geneticist and author of ‘ABO Blood Group Distribution in Wales in Relation to Human Settlement’.) discovered that the only other region of the world which produced similar gene frequency results to those of Britain was North Africa, particularly the so-called Hamatic tribes, which, as we have seen, are the accepted descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Along the Atlantic seaboard the only other correlation with Britain was to be found upon the peculiarly named ‘Island of Ra’, just off the North African coast.”

It would nice to see some specific research being done on the question of Pictish genetics. The results may surprise us all.

The other question often asked is, ‘Where did the Picts go to?’ This, thankfully, is slightly less problematic.

The commonly held belief is that when Kenneth Mac Alpin, King of Scots took over the governance of the Picts, the Scots migrated eastwards from Dalriada to colonise the whole of Pictland. The Picts, according to this perceived wisdom, somehow disappeared into thin air, allowing the Scots to move in and settle down.

Of course, this is quite impossible. The population of Pictland was much larger than that of Dalriada, and there is no way that the Scots could have taken over the whole country without enormous bloodshed, which clearly did not occur. So what actually happened? For an explanation, we must return to King Kenneth.

As we have seen from the King Lists, Mac Alpin was not the first king to rule over both Picts and Scots. It had happened before, during the reigns of Oengus son of Uurguist (No.58) and Constantin son of Wrguist (No.69). Constantin had even been recognised by the Scots of Dalriada as their ‘*Ard-Righ*’, or High King, in 809 A.D.

Surprising as it may seem, Kenneth Mac Alpin was not described by the Irish scribes as *'Rex Scotorum'*, King of Scots, but as *'Rex Pictorum'*, King of the Picts. It was the same with the next three kings who followed him. Donald Mac Alpin (859 – 863 A.D.), who was Kenneth's brother, and Kenneth's two sons Constantin (863 – 877 A.D.) and Aed (877- 878 A.D.) were all described in the annals as *Rex Pictorum*, never *Rex Scotorum*. Then something happened to bring about change. During the joint reign of Eochaid and Giric (878 – 889 A.D.), they, and all subsequent kings crowned at Scone began to be called *'Ri-Albain'*, King of Alba. But that still is not the same as being called King of Scots. What was going on?

The answer is that up until the close of the 9th century, the language used by the scribes in their annals was predominantly Latin, but when the clerics started writing in their own language, Gaelic, they began to employ the name which was used in common by all the Celtic peoples to designate the land of the Picts; *Alba*. The description *Rex Pictorum* simply became redundant, to be replaced by *Ri-Albain*. Yet if the new kings of the Picts were happy enough to be known as *Rex Pictorum* or *Ri-Albain*, how did Alba become Scotland, and how did they become Kings of Scots?

What seems to have happened is that from the 11th century, writers in England and Scotland who did not speak Gaelic began to use the Latin term *'Scotia'* (for the Scotti of Dalriada) to describe the whole country for reasons which are quite unclear.

Historically, the people who lived in the West of Pictland, or Alba, were called the Scotti; supposedly after Irish colonists going under that name settled in what was to become Dalriada sometime in the 5th century. However, recent archaeological research shows that this suggestion may be quite wrong, and that the Scotti were actually the indigenous inhabitants of Western Scotland; they simply shared a common culture with the people of Northern Ireland in a similar way to the situation regarding the Welsh and the Strathclyde Britons. Be that as it may, the term Scot or Scotia just seems to have crept into common usage by English speaking chroniclers.

This practice did not escape the notice of contemporary critics, however, as one (anonymous) scribe, writing in Latin in 1165 A.D. complained,

"That country which is now wrongly called Scotia (Que nunc corrupte vocatur Scotia) was long ago called Alba"

Pictish was in retreat. We cannot be sure why, but it is not an unknown phenomenon that when a people start to lose pride and faith in themselves, the first thing to go is usually their indigenous language. Gaelic had become the language of court and government in Alba after Kenneth Mac Alpin ascended the throne, and English was fast making sweeping inroads through the Lothians and Borders. Consequently the Pictish language, along with its own unique sense of identity, began to die out and with it went Pictish history, culture and customs.

It is difficult to say exactly when this happened and opinions vary widely among historians. However, consider this report from Picard (a town in France)

chronicler Guibert de Nogent, writing in 1100 A.D. about the colourful strangers encountered in France on their way to the Crusades.

“You might have seen groups of Scots, ferocious among themselves but elsewhere unwarlike, with bare legs, shaggy cloaks, a purse hanging from their shoulders, rolling down from their marshy borders.....Their speech was then unknown, so that, having no voice, they crossed one finger over another in the sign of the cross; thus showing us that they had set out for the cause of the faith”.

“*Their speech was then unknown...*” Was Guibert talking about Gaelic or was it Pictish? Gaelic was certainly known on the Continent, as Irish annals record frequent pilgrimages by Celtic church missionaries to places like Rome and Santiago de Compostella in Spain. In matters less spiritual we also know, for example, from the Annals of Inisfallen, (compiled 1215 A.D. and written in a blend of Latin and Irish Gaelic), that in the year 1105 A.D.

“A camel, which is an animal of wonderful size, was presented by the King of Alban (Scotland’s King Edgar) to Murchertach O’ Brian”. (a king of Ireland).

Scotland, as we can see, obviously traded far and wide. Consider this also. The Latin Chronicles of Marianus Scotus (1028-1081 A.D.) make the following informative comment about Mac Beth, the Gaelic speaking King of Scots, whilst he was on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1050 A.D.

“Rex Scottiae Mac Bethad Romae argentum pauperibus seminando distribuit”

“MacBeth the King of Scots in Rome scattered money like seed among the poor”.

Quite apart from the fact that Marianus’ observation salvages something from the wholly undeserved bad reputation that poor old Mac Beth has suffered since Shakespeare wrote his calumny of a play 400 years ago, it also shows us that the Scots did not live in isolation, that Gaelic speakers were not particularly remarkable in themselves, and that they were probably quite familiar in Europe. It is impossible to be sure of course, but it is this author’s opinion that the Scottish gentlemen observed by Guibert de Nogent, with their “bare legs and shaggy cloaks,” in 1100A.D., were the last remnants of the Pictish speakers of Alba.

The Pictish people did not die out; they were still there, living and breathing. They just started speaking another language and calling themselves by another name, and that name was Scots. Gaelic speakers still used the name Alba, and continue to do so right up to the present day, but before too long the language of court and government would be English, (with a brief spell of French) and Alba would become Scotland.

The Picts may not have realised initially what was happening of course, for people are generally too tied up in day-to-day affairs to bother with things like keeping a culture alive. Some would certainly have been concerned about their loss of identity, for some always are, but their voices of protest would have been

lost to the wind until gradually, little by little, the Pictish language and culture would decline until the day came when there was only one person left alive who could speak the ancient tongue. One wonders how that person felt. Very sad, we must imagine. A Scottish Gaelic phrase rather neatly sums up the whole argument about whether language is an important feature in the question of national identity. It says, simply,

‘Tir gun Chanain, Tir gun Anam’.

‘A Land without a Language is a Land without a Soul’.

The final chapter in the story of the Picts came in the year 1165 when, at the coronation of King William I, ‘The Lion’, the Royal Standard of Scotland which up until then had been a black wild boar emblazoned on a white background (some say a silver boar on a blue background, or field), was dropped in favour of the Lion Rampant, red on a yellow or gold field.

The Pictish Wild Boar, like the Pictish people themselves, had become a distant memory; something akin to a half remembered dream. Soon only their beautifully carved stones would be all that remained to bear testimony to their existence and heroic past. How regrettable it is that there are Scots today who have no idea that a great many of them will have the blood of the Picts pumping through their veins, carrying with it two thousand years of history and high deeds and almost all of it forgotten.

Appendix II – The Stone of Destiny

Perhaps a better word for this ancient stone would be ‘The Enigma Stone’, as everything about it seems shrouded in mystery. Over the centuries, this stone, the ancient crowning stone of the Scots, has been known by many names; among them ‘The Eastern Stone’ mentioned in the Gaelic poem ‘The Birth of Aedan Mac Gabhrain’ around 1060 A.D., ‘the Royal seat of Marble’, ‘the Pharaoh’s Stone’, ‘the Stone of Celebrated Memory’, ‘the Stone of Scotland’, ‘the Regal Stone’, ‘the Stone of Scone’, ‘Jacob’s Pillow’, ‘the Coronation Stone’, and the name by which it was known in Gaelic – the *‘Lia Fàil’* – translated as the ‘Stone of Destiny’.

According to legend, this ancient stone had been brought to Scone from Dalriada, (Argyll) by Kenneth Mac Alpin c. 850 A.D. It had previously been brought to Argyll from Ireland by Fergus Mac Erc, a Dalriadan king, sometime in the 5th century. Prior to this it had been transported to Ireland via Spain by *Scota*, the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh; both cautiously identified by Egyptologist Lorraine Evans in her book “Kingdom of the Ark” as Princess Meritaten and her father, Pharaoh Akhenaten.

Scota is supposed to have fled Egypt with her Greek husband Gathelos, or Gaidelon, and his followers sometime around 1335 B.C. following a rebellion in which Akhenaten was overthrown by Horemheb, the army commander. The ‘Scots’, it is said, after a period in Spain followed by an interval in Ireland, eventually settled in Dalriada and took their name from this Princess *Scota*, to become the people known throughout history as the ‘Scotti’.

Some intriguing evidence of an Egyptian contact and influence during this period does appear to have been found in Tara, Ireland, when an ancient stone-age burial chamber, known as the ‘Mound of Hostages’ was excavated in 1955. Although the mound itself is Neolithic (c.3000B.C.), the remains of a much later Bronze Age inhumation were discovered, which turned out to be that of an 18 year old youth who was buried with a bronze dagger and pin, and wearing a necklace of Egyptian ‘Faience’ beads. These beads, a type of ceramic, were found to be of genuine Egyptian origin and were quite unknown in Northern Europe. The skeleton was carbon dated to c.1350 B.C. and this date, as we have seen, given the usual hundred years or so normally allowed for correction either way that is such a feature of carbon dating, was just around the time that *Scota* and her husband are supposed to have fled Egypt.

The problem with all of this is that *Scota* does not appear to be an Egyptian word. It looks like Greek, and, recalling that *Scota*’s husband was a Greek, and the tenet that the Greeks are reputed to have a word for everything, we can fairly confidently surmise that ‘*Scota*’ must indeed mean something. Before his readers reach for their Greek dictionaries, however, the author begs their forbearance, and asks them to read a little further.

The stone which currently lies in Edinburgh Castle, along with the Honours of Scotland, and is reputed to be the same one which King Edward I of England stole in 1296 A.D. measures approximately 26 ½ x 16 ½ x 10 ½ inches (670 x 420 x 265 mm). It is acknowledged by geologists as being of Scottish sandstone, and may have been quarried in the region of Scone near Perth.

This rectangular block of sandstone is considered by a great many people to be the very stone which Kenneth Mac Alpin reportedly brought with him from Argyll to Scone over a thousand years ago. Yet, if we take the trouble to compare this coronation stone with the stone's early descriptions, we get quite a surprise.

A clear and contemporary eyewitness description of the 'Stone of Scone' was made by an Englishman, Walter de Hemingford (also known as de Guisborough), who attended the coronation of John Baliol in 1292 A.D. He depicted it as "*Concavus quidem ad modum rotundae cathedrae confectus*", i.e. "hollowed and made in the form of a round chair". The 14th century English 'Chronicles of Melsa' also describe the Stone of Scone as being "*hollowed out, and partly fashioned in the form of a round chair*". The coronation stone certainly has an incised groove forming a rectangular panel measuring 17 x 9 inches (430 x 230 mm) on its upper face, but this is not the same as being 'hollowed out'. Neither is the shape of the stone round, nor does it resemble a throne or chair by any stretch of the imagination.

The name 'The Stone of Destiny' has come to us from a poor English translation of the Gaelic words *Lia*, a great stone, and *Fàil*, meaning fatal; hence 'fate', and subsequently 'destiny'. However, the *Lia Fàil* was originally known to the Irish as the *Lia Faileas*, and *Faileas* doesn't mean fate at all, but rather spectral, or spiritual shadow. It appears that this confusion has come about from a perfectly simple word contraction made a very long time ago by an Irish scribe, and the error of mistaking *fàil* for *faileas* has continued without question ever since.

Irish legends inform us that the *Lia Faileas* was one of the four great treasures given to the Celts by the De Danaans, a mythical god-like people of early Ireland; the other three treasures being an invincible sword, a fiery spear red with blood, and a cauldron of plenty from the fabled cities of Gorias, Finias and Murias respectively. The *Lia Faileas*, exclusively for use in the coronation of kings, was gifted from the city of Faileas, which means 'the Place of Shadow'.

This brings us neatly to the word *Scota* (the Pharaoh's daughter), which we find is not a person's name at all, but is indeed a Greek word, meaning 'darkness, shadow, obscurity and secrecy'. The great stone, we recall, was described as being round and hollowed, so it should come as no surprise to us to learn that the word *Scotia* is an archaic architectural term which was used to describe a sunken moulding, or a hollow, so called from the dark shadow it casts. In other words, our *Lia Faileas*.

From what we have therefore discovered, it now seems that the old legends are correct in essence, except that the Scots or Scotti took their name not from the Pharaoh Akhenaten's daughter, Meritaten, otherwise known to us as *Scota*, but from her Greek husband Gathelos' great stone talisman; a sacred throne that they and their tribe took everywhere on their wanderings, eventually to end up in Scotland.

To summarise:

The Gaelic words *Lia Faileas* and the Greek words *Scota* or *Scotia* mean the same thing in the end, which is ‘the great stone of spiritual shadow, or spectral darkness’. It was round, hollowed, and partly shaped like a chair or throne. And no less an authority than the Roman historian Pliny the Elder (23A.D.-79A.D.) tells us that, “in Persia, a lens shaped stone was considered necessary at the consecration of a king.”

Say what one may, but this certainly does not describe the block of sandstone that sat in Westminster Abbey for seven centuries. Kenneth Mac Alpin’s throne has disappeared, probably lost during the Wars of Independence. The ‘Stone of Destiny’ lying in Edinburgh Castle today may have been used by the Picts as part of the installation ceremonies for their kings, perhaps like some form of footstool upon which an oath was taken, and it may have been used similarly by King Kenneth and his heirs. It is unlikely that we will ever know for sure. What we **do** know is that it was **not** the actual throne upon which the ancient kings were crowned.

If only we knew where it was...

Perhaps a good place to start would be the site of the Abbey of Scone that was sadly demolished during the Reformation in 1560. A proper archaeological dig might just give us what we are looking for. We may even find the final resting-place of Robert the Bruce’s grandson, King Robert the Second (died 1390), who was buried somewhere within the Abbey.

Finally, consider this quotation from a book which was published in 2000 called “Uriel’s Machine”, written by Christopher Knight and Roger Lomas. They are discussing the 5000-years-old burial mound at Newgrange in Ireland, closely associated with tales of the De Danaans and High Kings.

“...we turned left up the Boyne valley, in the general direction of the Hill of Tara where the ancient High Kings of Ireland were acclaimed by placing their foot on the Lia Fàil, the Stone of Destiny. Then, through the trees across the river, we suddenly saw the great white wall of Newgrange on the skyline.”

“...we had to stoop to walk up the narrow tunnel which was lined with enormous slabs of rock. The plan view of the chamber is in the form of a cross, and in each of the arms there is a beautifully worked stone basin...”

These ‘basins’ are hollowed out on the top, and would serve admirably as thrones. There is a particularly fine example of one of those stone basins inside the Neolithic chamber at Knowth, further along the Boyne valley. It is round and decorated with engravings. No one knows the purpose of these basins, nor just how old they are, yet they were obviously of some great significance. How coincidental that the round one should match so exactly the descriptions that we have of the Stone of Scone. Was each one of these basins a ‘Lia Faileas’; and, perhaps more importantly, did a round one make its way to Scotland?

The author’s research satisfies him that ‘*Scota*’ is a Greek word that means spiritual or spectral shadow. But he would like to draw the reader’s attention to an Egyptian word which, if not exactly like the Greek word *Scota*, bears a strong

enough resemblance to that word in its meaning and pronunciation to merit its consideration in this work. It may well pre-date the Greek word by thousands of years, and, if anything, only adds to the author's argument about the 'Stone of Destiny' being a misinterpretation of the original meaning which was the 'Stone of Spiritual, or Spectral, Shadow'.

The ancient Egyptians believed that a human being consisted of five separate parts or elements. Those were the body itself ('ha'), the personality of the person ('ba'), the life force of the person ('ka'), the name of the person ('ren'), and, most significantly from our point of view, the *shadow* of the person. The shadow of the body was considered an important and integral part of an individual and its name, according to Egyptologists, was the '*shut*'.

This word 'shut' obviously has links to all similar sounding words of Indo-European and Aryan origin that have connotations with the shadow or spirit of the dead. The list seems endless. In English we have 'shade'. In the Celtic languages we have Welsh 'ysgod', Gaelic 'sgath' and Cornish 'scod'. In Gothic we have 'skadus' and we are already aware of the Greek word 'scota'. For the simpler S or SH sound we can travel even further back in time and find in Hindi 'saya', and in Sanskrit 'chaya' both of which have similar meanings to those above and are likely to have been their progenitors.

It is, however, with the Egyptian word 'shut' that we are most concerned, as we are attempting to define the link between the Princess Scotra and the so called Stone of Destiny. The hieroglyph for this word is shown in two parts and consists of a sunshade, identifying the S or SH sound, and a loaf of bread, identifying the T sound. No hieroglyph was shown for the U sound. Egyptian, in common with many ancient scripts, rarely showed vowels in words and it remained to readers to interpret subjectively the sounds of words from their context within a sentence. 'Shut' may not have had a U vowel sound at all. It is just as likely to have been pronounced with an O sound, i.e. like 'Shot'.

Could our word 'Scota' have developed, perhaps via Greek, from a metamorphosed form of the Egyptian word 'Shut', the 'spiritual shadow' of a person? It's not impossible. We cannot be sure at this distance in time just how the ancient Egyptians pronounced many of their words. They may have pronounced the SH in the word 'shut' with a quite discernible guttural sound, a bit like Schut (ch as in loch) or Schot. Indeed, the English word 'shade' was itself originally written 'sceadu'. It is a fact that written alphabets are often quite inefficient at conveying the guttural sounds of many words.

There is another hieroglyph that the Egyptians made use of to convey the S or SH sound. It is a long, horizontal rectangular shape and was, apparently, the plan view of an artificial basin. We saw above that stone basins were important to the people who installed them in the chambered cairns at Knowth and Newgrange, though we know not why. The significance will not be lost on the reader however, that the S, or SH sounds, were identified to the ancient Egyptians by the hieroglyphs for both a sunshade and a basin.

Appendix III – Pictish Language

As discussed earlier, the loss of all original documents written by the Picts in their own language, or perhaps more accurately languages, means we have no clear idea of what language(s) the Picts actually spoke. The King Lists are of almost no help at all, as they appear to have been written in various forms of phonetics by Irish scribes attempting to use the Latin and Gaelic alphabets to convey the sounds of Pictish names as they were being transmitted to them orally by persons unknown to us. The best that linguists have come up with is that there were probably two languages spoken by the Picts; one in the North and the other in the South.

This conclusion was reached by study of the place names in those areas known to have been inhabited by the Picts, and by statements made by contemporary and medieval writers who recognised the existence of autogenous Pictish speech. For example, St. Columba's biographer Adamnan noted that the Saint was forced to use the services of an interpreter on two separate occasions. Once, while on the Isle of Skye in the North-West of Scotland when he baptised a "decrepit old man, the chief of the Geona cohort," (Book 1 Ch.xxvii), and again, this time in an unspecified area of Pictland, when through prayer he brought a child back to life. Prior to this the whole family had been baptised (Book 2 Ch.xxxiii).

It is not our purpose here to discuss whether or not Columba really brought the child back to life. We were not there to witness what actually happened and so are unable to pass comment. The point is that all of the conversations with "the husband, together with his wife, children, and the *domestics*" (this was obviously a family of some substance) could only take place with the aid of an interpreter. St. Columba doesn't appear to have required a translator's help however, during the course of his visit(s) to King Brude's fort and his dialogues with various people there, so plainly there were at least two languages being used in Pictland in the sixth century.

In consequence, it has been widely accepted that the language spoken in the South of Pictland was a form of P-Celtic, rather similar to that spoken by the Britons of Strathclyde or the early Welsh, and that the language spoken in the North, (though this view has somewhat fallen out of favour in recent years), may have been an aboriginal non-Indo-European speech; possibly akin to Basque. Curiously, as regards the Basque theory at any rate, extensive D.N.A. research, carried out during 2004 by a team from Trinity College, Dublin, shows striking genetic affinities between the Scots, Irish and Welsh and the people of N.W. Spain; *in particular the Basque Region and Galicia*. The study was published in the American Journal of Human Genetics in an article entitled; 'The Longue Durée'.

As a subject for investigation it could probably best be described as akin to looking for a black cat in a windowless coal cellar, yet occasionally a glimmer of light flickers in the Stygian blackness that is Pictish language study. One such is the word '*cartait*' that was recorded by the bishop of Cashel c.900A.D. as being a Pictish expression, ("*berla Cruithneach*"), meaning a thorn or a pin. This word is neither Gaelic nor Welsh, yet how alike '*cartait*' is to the Latin word '*carduus*' and the Spanish word '*cardo*', both meaning a thistle; that well known prickly *thorny* plant that has become such a well loved symbol of Scotland.

Yet another glimmer (though paler and even more obscure) may be found in the word '*Peever*', the flat stone or similar object that is used as a puck in the

well known children's hopping and skipping game called 'Beds' in Scotland, but 'Hop-scotch' everywhere else. The word Peever is often applied to the actual game itself. There is no known original source for this word. It certainly isn't English and its origins appear to be quite a mystery.

If we take a look at Gaelic however, we find an obsolete mid-Perthshire Gaelic word '*Piobhair*' (bh in Gaelic sounds like the letter V.), meaning a sieve or a honeycomb. The usual Gaelic word for a honeycomb is '*cir-mheala*'. Now, if we examine the game of Hop-scotch, we find that the pattern of squares and spaces chalked or scratched on the ground for playing the game resembles in many ways a sieve or honeycomb, and a little diligent research tells us that the Latin word for a honeycomb is '*Favus*'.

Is it really beyond a stretch of the imagination to see a link between Peever, Piobhair and Favus? Perhaps Gaels simply borrowed the word Favus from Latin and hardened the F to a P, but Perthshire was at the very heart of Pictland, and Piobhair, for a honeycomb, seems to have been used solely by Gaelic speakers in Mid-Perthshire. Could it be like 'cartait' and 'carduus' mentioned above? Nobody is saying that the Picts spoke Latin, but isn't there a chance that they may have spoken a previously unlooked-for branch of Indo-European? Language links are often found existing as 'fossils' in quite unexpected ways. The author accepts that those discussed above may be tenuous to say the least, but they could be the sort of clues that we are seeking. Might the name 'Beds' derive from the Pictish word Pett or Pit, believed to signify a division? The game is based on numbered divisions. Might the 'scotch' in Hop-scotch derive from Old Norse 'skyt' or 'skjota', meaning to propel? The puck is propelled. Perhaps a nice thought we could also ponder is: did the Pictish and Norse children play Hop-scotch?

Frustrating as it is that we have no surviving documents written in Pictish, we do have something rather more enduring than parchment, and that is the evidence provided by the Ogam inscriptions, carved onto a number of stone monuments, presumably by the Picts themselves.

Ogam is a method of representing alphabetical characters by cutting grooves or strokes into wood or more generally stone; either along one edge of the stone or across one face with the strokes incised along a straight baseline. Various groups and angles of stroke represent different letters of the alphabet. The difficulty is that, although we know what the individual letters are in the Ogam alphabet, it has proved quite impossible so far to translate the Pictish inscriptions into any form of recognisable language.

The complaint often heard from those struggling to translate Pictish Ogam, is that what we need is a Pictish 'Rosetta Stone'. That is, a stone or manuscript, written in both Pictish and another language that we already know, with both languages giving the same message; in other words, a contiguous bilingual text.

The idea is, that by referring from one text to the other, as was done with the famous Egyptian Rosetta Stone, when the black basalt slab which now carries this name was discovered in the early 18th century and was found to bear information written in both Greek and the then unfathomable Egyptian

hieroglyphs, we should hopefully be able to build up a Pictish vocabulary that we could then use to translate all the Ogam inscriptions, the meaning of which so frustratingly continues to elude us.

The fact is that a stone that is believed to carry a bi-lingual text hopefully proving it to be the miracle Pictish 'Rosetta Stone' everyone has been looking for, was found in 1803 in Strathdon, Aberdeenshire. It is known as the 'Newton Stone', as it lies about a mile south of Newton House, although previously to this it was called the 'Pitmachie Stone' due to its proximity to Pitmachie Farm. This stone, or perhaps more accurately, elongated boulder, is around two feet (610 m.m.) thick and six and a half feet (two metres) in height. The material is quartzite gneiss, which is a very hard, durable type of rock, and it is extremely difficult to carve.

The stone carries two inscriptions. Engraved down the left-hand side and turning up at the bottom to run across part of the face, is an inscription in Ogam; while across the top third of the stone is an engraving in a different form of text altogether. The lettering is curvilinear in its form and execution, and consists of six lines comprising 49 characters in total. It is usually assumed that both inscriptions bear the same message and information. The problem, and it's a very big problem, is this: quite apart from the Ogam lettering on the stone, no one has been able to translate the curvilinear script either.

Among the various suggestions made for the origin of this language is that it may be one of the following: Hebrew, Greek, Coptic, Latin, Palmyrene, or Aryan-Phoenician. Many brave attempts at deciphering both of the languages on this stone have been made over the past 200 years and all of them have ended with inconclusive results. This caused one academic half a century ago to declare, (rather sniffily it might be added), that the inscription "may be, in any event, a nineteenth-century forgery". Readers can rest assured that it is no such thing. The author of this book is a stone carver, well acquainted with stone in its many forms, and he knows ancient weather worn carving when he sees it. Indeed, it is his opinion, from close observation of the stone, that the curvilinear script is considerably older than the Ogam script, as shown by clear signs of more advanced weathering.

A relatively recent endeavour at a completely new translation of the inscriptions on the Newton Stone has been made, however, by Dr. Richard A.V. Cox whose book, "The Language of the Ogam Inscriptions of Scotland" (1999), provides an argument to show that, while carrying different messages and therefore not bi-lingual, both of the inscriptions may have been made using 11th-12th century Norse. He believes that the curvilinear script is a type of Roman alphabet known as Insular Minuscule. Dr. Cox extends his conclusions to several more Ogam stones in Scotland, yet his findings seem to raise more questions than answers, and have, frankly, left linguists and archaeologists scratching their heads. If, as he believes, the language of the Ogam inscriptions was indeed Old Norse, then why was it not written using Norse runes, as one would expect, instead of Ogam script? In many ways the Runic alphabet is superior to that of Ogam, and if the time frame for their creation was c.11th century, how does that equate with the archaeologists' opinions that the inscriptions were made between the 5th and 9th centuries?

A strong criticism of Dr. Cox's 'Norse theory' has been made by Dr. W.A. Cummins in his book "The Lost Language of the Picts" (2001) where he says of Dr. Cox's findings that "the uncertainties of the interpretation are obscured by a great deal of learned linguistic camouflage". Dr. Cummins' view is that the Picts spoke a form of Q-Celtic similar to Old Irish. Obviously more research is required before we can say for sure what language(s) the Picts spoke.

On the subject of Ogam itself, it is generally believed and stated that this script was invented in Ireland sometime in the 4th century by an erudite Irishman called Ogma, though the credit is sometimes given to a Gaulish God called Ogmios. Yet what is often overlooked is that '*ogam*' is not an Irish word; it stems from an ancient Greek word '*ogme*' meaning a groove. From it is derived the Greek word '*ogmos*' meaning a straight line, specifically a straight ploughed furrow; it can also mean a row or a file, as in a line of people. Certainly the Greek words provide a pretty accurate description of this ancient script, but, if it were invented in the 4th century by the Irish, why would they use a Greek word to describe their own invention? The grooved base line for Ogam letters is not called an *ogmos*, it is called by a Gaelic word, '*fleasg*', meaning a rod or wand, and the Gaelic word for a row or straight ploughed furrow is '*scriob*'. Surely either word would have served perfectly well instead of the Greek *ogmos*, itself derived from the Sanskrit word '*Ag-m-as*,' which has an equivalent meaning.

Unpalatable as it may be for some, the evidence seems to show that Ogam was not invented in Ireland in the 4th century, but came originally from the Middle East, along with its distinctive name. Consider this:

The 12th century Irish '*Auraicept na n-éces*' (the Scholars' Primer), which is the work of several different hands, states in one section that Ogam was invented in Ireland. Yet it also states in another section, (Lines 1105 to 1106), that Gaelic and the Ogam script was invented in "the plain of Shinar" i.e. Sumer or Mesopotamia, and in another yet again, (line 251), in "Achaidh", i.e. 'Accad', or 'Akkad', also in Sumer (Genesis ch.10 v.10.). It is widely acknowledged by scholars that this magnificent work is the principal authority on Ogam script, so why its conflicting claim for a Middle Eastern origin for Ogam should be generally ignored by so many academics is quite beyond this author.

According to Middle East historian L. A. Waddell, Ogamoid inscriptions have been found in Sumerian hieroglyphs dating from around 1000-1500 B.C. which show remarkable affinity with the Ogam alphabet used in inscriptions in Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

For example:

'I' is written in Ogam by five parallel strokes perpendicular to the baseline. The Sumerian 'I' is represented by five perpendicular strokes.

'E' in Ogam comprises four perpendicular strokes crossing the baseline, and the Sumerian sign for the god EA is identical to this.

'B' in Ogam consists of a single perpendicular stroke, and the Sumerian 'B' is a single bolt sign or stroke.

'S' in Ogam is formed by four perpendicular strokes, exactly the same as the Sumerian representation.

In conclusion, these facts and the other similarities surely establish that Ogam is a much more archaic form of writing than is generally acknowledged. Its arrival on these shores could well have pre-dated the coming of Christianity by some considerable time.

As to why this clumsy form of lettering should have been used by the Picts for their inscriptions, (assuming that it **was** the Picts that made them), instead of the much more convenient and adaptable Latin or Runic alphabets is a mystery in itself, which may never be solved.

Could it be that they just liked to hang on to their age-old traditions? From what little we do know of our Pictish ancestors and their spirit of independence, we needn't be surprised.

Appendix IV – The Brude Kings.

Apart from the 79 Kings listed, the Pictish Chronicles also give a list of 28 kings (though they describe it as 30) called Brude, who supposedly reigned for a total period of 150 years; (there's that 150 again) Their reigns followed Cruithne and his seven sons and preceded King Gede. (No. 1)

Most historians are doubtful that these 'Brudes' were actual kings. They believe that, as they were all improbably called by the same name and occur as they do in pairs, it is more likely that they were some sort of slogan or jingle, intended to be chanted repeatedly as a form of rallying cry. Certainly, their lay out gives the impression that they may have been designed to be an aid to memory for some ritual or other whose meaning has ironically been lost to us. They are given below.

Brude Pant	Brude Ur Pant
Brude Leo	Brude Ur Leo
Brude Gant	Brude Ur Gant
Brude Gnith	Brude Ur Gnith
Brude Fecir	Brude Ur Fecir
Brude Cal	Brude Ur Cal
Brude Cint	Brude Ur Cint
Brude Fec	Brude Ur Fec
Brude Ru	Brude Ur Ru
Brude Gart	Brude Ur Gart
Brude Cinid	Brude Ur Cinid
Brude Uip	Brude Ur Uip
Brude Grid	Brude Ur Grid
Brude Mund	Brude Ur Mund

It has been suggested by some linguists that the prefix 'Ur' may be similar to the Welsh '*Guor*', meaning 'high' or 'over', and the Gaelic prefix '*Fior*' meaning 'true,' 'pure' or 'noble.' Other linguists have suggested that Ur may be a Pictish form of the Celtic '*Ua*', meaning 'descendant' or 'son'. Others yet that 'Brude' may not be a personal name so much as a title, like Lord or Sir. Brude Ur Leo, for example, may mean 'Leo, the Lord High'.

It will not have escaped the reader's attention that many of the Brudes have names that also appear in the King Lists in a similar or approximate form. See below.

<u>Brude List</u>	<u>King List</u> (Position in list)
Brude Leo	Morleo (3)
Brude Gant	Cantulmet (19)
Brude Gnith	Kineth (76)
Brude Cal	Galanan (28)
Brude Cint	Ciniod (63)
Brude Fec	Fiacha (18)
Brude Ru	Ru (13)
Brude Gart	Gartnait (14)
Brude Cinid	Cináed (79)
Brude Grid	Crautreic (10)

If we take into account the realistic probability that the southern Picts spoke a form of P-Celtic similar to Old Welsh (while not forgetting the other learned arguments that have been put forward to the contrary), then it may be that these 'Brudes' are simply a 'P' form (hardened to a B) of the Irish and Gaelic word 'Cruth' or 'Cruithne', meaning 'of the Picts'.

The Irish text in the 14th century 'Book of Ballymote' says,

"Bruide adberthea fri gach fir dib, randa na fear aile; ro gabsadar L. ar C. ut est illeabraibh na Cruithneach".

This translates as:

"And Brude was the name of each man of them, and of the divisions of the other men. They possessed an hundred and fifty years, as it is in the many books of the Cruithneach".

The implication is that everyone in Pictland was a 'Brude' and indeed this, or something similar, may have been what the Picts originally called themselves. As for those other kings called Brude in the main King List, like Brude the son of Bile (48), and Brude the son of Uurguist (59), they may simply have been named Brude in the same way that many Scots of today are called 'Scott'.

The list of 28 Brudes might have been Pictish Kings after all.

.....

Post Scriptum.

Gaire mu aobhar a'ghuil.

(Laughing at the cause of weeping.)

So there you have it. 'The History of the Kings of the Picts'. No humour at all. Nothing but war, bloodshed and tears. Or was it? Consider this little extract from the Annals of Ulster for the year 891 A.D. A wee bit outside of our Pictish historical period, but only just.

"Banscal rolai in muir a n-Albain, cxcv do troigib in a fot, secht troigi dec in a trillsi, vii troigi fot meoir a laimhe, vii troigi fot a srona gilithir geis uile hi".

"A woman was thrown out of the sea in Alban. She was 195 feet long, seventeen feet the length of her hair; the fingers of her hand were seven feet long, seven feet long her nose, and she was all whiter than a swan."

~~~~~

Well, writing that must have made a nice change for the scribes. I wonder what the talk was like when that report came in. I bet they laughed their heads off at the thought of what they could say about the size of her husband.

They just don't make them like that any more do they?

Ronald W. Henderson.

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE.

This rough guide is added in the hope that it will assist readers interested in the pronunciation of the Gaelic and Irish text used in this book. Readers should note that there are only 18 letters in the Gaelic alphabet compared to 26 in English. That is; no J, K, Q, V, W, X, Y, Z.

### Vowels.

|                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A as in English word Cat.             | Never as in Late or What. |
| E as in English word They or Wet.     | Never as in Me.           |
| I as in English word Machine or Grit. | Never as in Fire or Fine. |
| O as in English word Go or Got.       | Never as in Brown.        |
| U as in English word Put or Cut.      | Never as in Duel.         |
| EI as in English word Vein            | Never as in Either        |
| AO as EU in the French word Neuve.    |                           |

### Consonants Paired with Slender Vowels.( I and E )

|                                                                                                            |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| IS sounds like the ISS in Mission or ISS as in Hiss.                                                       | Never as in Isle. |
| SI sounds like the SSI in Mission.                                                                         |                   |
| IDH and IGH sound like EE as in Sheep.                                                                     |                   |
| DHI and GHI sound like the English word YE.                                                                |                   |
| I and E when following consonant D often sound like a Y.                                                   |                   |
| D when followed by I or E sounds like a J. For example, the Gaelic word Dearg (red) sounds like 'Jyerrag'. |                   |

### Consonants Aspirated with Letter H.

|                                                              |                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PH as in Photograph or Phone.                                |                                                                     |
| BH Like a V, as in Vast. MH also sounds like a V but softer. |                                                                     |
| CH as in Scots pronunciation of Loch.                        | Never as in Chum or like a K.                                       |
| CHD sounds like CHK with CH as in Scots word Loch.           |                                                                     |
| DH and GH. Like Ugh; (guttural)                              | Never as in Laughter but sometimes silent like the GH in Slaughter. |
| SH and TH. Like an H as in Hat.                              | S and T become silent when preceding the letter H.                  |

FH is quite silent and has no sound at all except for three words. Namely, Fhein (self), Fhuair (got), and Fhathast (yet). FH in all three cases sounds like an H, as in House or Hero.

### Other Sounds.

|                         |                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ANN (in).               | Sounds like AOWN where the OW is as in the word Now.                                                                                        |
| L before vowels A, O, U | sounds like LL as in Falling, or the Scottish pronunciation of 'Wullie'.                                                                    |
| RT                      | very often has an RST sound as in First. (Remember-pronounce the R.)                                                                        |
| C at the end of a word  | sounds like CHK with the CH as in Scots Loch. Elsewhere it sounds like C as in Cut. <u>Never</u> as in Cylinder.                            |
| CN                      | often sounds like KR. Cnoc (hill) is pronounced Crawchk.                                                                                    |
| D and T.                | Press tongue firmly against the back of the front teeth.                                                                                    |
| G.                      | Pronounce deep in back of the throat.                                                                                                       |
| B and P.                | Pronounce with the lips firmly pressed together.                                                                                            |
| S.                      | Can sound like S as in Soft, or SH as in Sure. It depends on the word. Just remember that it is <u>never</u> pronounced as in Busy or Vase. |

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The 'Pictish Chronicles' referred to throughout the text are currently held in the Bibliothèque National in Paris, and are known as *The Colbertine MS, Latin No. 4126*.

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*Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings; so you shall come easily by what others have laboured for. Prefer knowledge to wealth, for one is transitory, the other perpetual.*

Socrates.      468-399. B.C.