

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCOTLAND

By Tim Lambert

Ancient Scotland

During the ice age Scotland was uninhabited. However, when the ice melted forests spread across Scotland and stone age hunters moved there. By 6,000 BC small groups of people lived in Scotland by hunting animals like red deer and seals and by gathering plants for food.

Then about 4,500 BC farming was introduced into Scotland. The early farmers continued to use stone tools and weapons and this period is called the Neolithic (new stone age). The Neolithic people used stone axes or fire to clear forests for farming and they grew wheat, barley, and rye. They also bred cattle and sheep. They lived in simple stone huts with roofs of turf or thatch. The finest example of a Neolithic village was found in Orkney after a storm in 1850. The inhabitants lived in stone huts with stone shelves and stone seats inside. They also had stone beds, which were probably covered with straw or heather. The people of Skara Brae used pottery vessels.

By 1,800 BC people in Scotland had learned to make bronze. The Bronze Age people continued to live in simple huts but they are famous for their stone monuments. They arranged huge stones in circles. The fact that they were able to do so indicates they lived in an organized society.

The Picts and Scots

The Picts lived in round huts of wood or stone with thatched roofs. Some Picts lived in crannogs, which were huts erected on artificial platforms in lochs or estuaries. Pictish chieftains built hill forts of stone, wood or earth. Pictish farmers raised cattle, pigs and sheep. They also fished, hunted deer and seals and caught birds. They grew crops of wheat, barley, and rye. They also gathered wild fruits such as crab-apples, sloes, raspberries, blackberries and damsons.

Although the vast majority of Picts were farmers some worked as craftsmen such as blacksmiths, bronze smiths, goldsmiths and potters. The Picts were very skilled at making jewelry. They also carved pictures on stones. Upper class Picts spent their days hunting on horseback or hunting with falcons. In the evenings they drank and feasted.

Scotland's written history begins with the Romans. The Romans invaded Scotland in 80 AD led by Agricola. They advanced into southern Scotland and then marched into the northeast. In 84 the Romans severely defeated the Picts at a place called Mons Graupius (its exact location is unknown). However, in the years after the battle, the Romans slowly withdrew and in 123 Emperor Hadrian began building a wall to keep out the Picts.

Later in the Second century the Romans advanced again and in 140 they built the Antonine Wall from the

Clyde to the Forth. However, the Romans finally abandoned the Antonine Wall in 196 AD. Afterward, Hadrian's Wall became the frontier. The Romans advanced into Scotland again in 209 AD but only temporarily. In 367-68 the Picts took part in a great raid upon Roman Britain.

In the 6th century a people from Ireland called the Scots invaded what is now Scotland. They settled in what is now Argyll and founded the kingdom of Dalriada.

Meanwhile Christian missionaries had begun the work of converting the Picts. Some Picts in southeast Scotland accepted Christianity in the 5th century. Columba who went there in 563 converted southwest Scotland to Christianity. He founded a monastery at Iona, which became very important in the history of Christianity in Britain. During the 6th and 7th centuries, Christianity spread across Scotland and by the end of the 7th century all of Scotland was Christian.

Further south in the 6th century Angles invaded Northeast England and they created the kingdom of Northumbria. In the early 7th century the Northumbrians expanded into southeast Scotland and as far as Dunbar and Edinburgh. Then, in 843 Kenneth MacAlpin who was king of the Scottish kingdom of Dalriada also became king of the Picts of northern and central Scotland. So the Scots and Picts merged to form a single kingdom. However, the new kingdom of Scotland only included land north of the

Clyde and Forth. The English ruled the southeast of Scotland until 1018 when the Scots conquered it. Furthermore, southwest Scotland and Cumbria formed a separate kingdom called Strathclyde. However, in 1018 Strathclyde was peacefully absorbed into Scotland.