

**HISTORY OF SCOTTISH SEALS
FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, VOL. I:
THE ROYAL SEALS OF SCOTLAND**

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History of Scottish Seals from the Eleventh to the Seventeenth Century, Vol. I: The Royal Seals of Scotland by Walter de Gray Birch

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HISTORY
OF
SCOTTISH SEALS

FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,
WITH UPWARDS OF TWO HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS
DERIVED FROM THE FINEST AND MOST
INTERESTING EXAMPLES EXTANT.

BY

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VOL. I.

THE ROYAL SEALS OF SCOTLAND.

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1905.



THE SEALS OF SCOTLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT SEALS OF THE SOVEREIGNS.

THE earliest history of the kings of Scotland, like that of kings of other countries, is involved in obscurity. One of the latest writers on the royal Scottish genealogy gives a pedigree commencing with Alpin the Scot, whose son, Kenneth I.—called Kenneth MacAlpin—held the reins of empire from A.D. 844 to 859, in which latter year he was succeeded by his brother, Donald I. Kenneth I. left three children—Constantine I., who ruled from A.D. 863 to 877; Aed, who succeeded his elder brother, A.D. 877, and gave place to Eocha, son of Run, the husband of a daughter, the third child of Kenneth I. Eocha was succeeded by Donald II., son

of Constantine I., A.D. 889-900. To him succeeded Constantine II., son of Aed, A.D. 900-942. Malcolm I., son of Donald II., ruled from A.D. 942 to 954, and was followed by Indulf, son of Constantine II., A.D. 954-962. The next king on record is Dubh, eldest son of Malcolm II., A.D. 962-967; then Cuilean, son of Indulf, A.D. 967-971; Kenneth II., second son of Malcolm I., A.D. 971-995; Constantine III., son of Cuilean, A.D. 995-997; and Kenneth III., son of Dubh, A.D. 997-1005. To the last of these succeeded Malcolm II., son of Kenneth II. He is called Malcolm Maccinaeth, King of Alban, King of Scotia, and by other titles. He was born in or before A.D. 954, and became King of Scots in Alban, after defeating his cousin Kenneth III., in battle at Monzievaird, on the River Earn, about 25th March, 1005. In 1031, Scotia was invaded by Canute, or Cnut, King of England, and Malcolm II., with two powerful chieftains, submitted to him in 1031. King Malcolm II. died, after a reign of upwards of twenty-nine years, at the age of eighty or more years, at Glammys, on the 25th November, 1034. To Malcolm II. succeeded his grandson, Duncan the First—known as Duncan the Wise—King of Scots, or King of the Cumbrians. Shakespeare calls him "the Gracious Duncan" in *Macbeth*. He was the eldest son of the

thegn Crinan, hereditary lay Abbot of Dunkeld, and Steward of the Isles, by his wife, Bethoc, eldest daughter of the previous monarch. After a short reign of five years and eight months, he was murdered by Macbeth, one of his commanders, at Bothnagowan, or Pitgaveny, near Elgin, on 14th August, 1040. To him succeeded his murderer, Macbeth, the mormaer of Moray, son of Finlacc, the mormaer; his mother being supposed to have been Donada, the second daughter of King Malcolm II. Macbeth met his death by the hands of his murderer, Malcolm, King of the Cumbrians, afterwards known as Malcolm III., "Ceannmor," at Lunfanan, in Mar, 15th August, A.D. 1057; and after the short reign of Lulach, son of Gillacomgan, mormaer of Moray, by his wife, Gruoch, daughter of Bodhe, and stepson of King Macbeth, who married Gruoch, on Gillacomgan's death, who was also murdered by Malcolm, at Essie, in Strathbogie, 17th March, 1057-8. The murderer* sat upon the throne of his victims as the "Great Head," or Chief, — the last king who possessed Alban—being the eldest son

* In H.M. Record Office there is a remarkable seal, imperfect, in brown wax, attributed to Malcolm III., or Ceannmor, King of Scots. It bears a shield of arms: a lion rampant, the tail curved inwards, after a peculiar manner (to be discussed hereafter), within a double treasure-flory counterflory, the Royal Arms of Scotland of a later age. This is an undoubted forgery.

of King Duncan I. This king invaded England on several occasions, and on the last occasion he met his death at the hands of Mored of Bamborough, at Alnwick, in Northumberland, on 13th November, 1093, after a reign of upwards of thirty-five years. To him followed his younger brother, Donald Bane, King of Scots, or of Alban, at the age of about sixty years, but after six months he was deposed by his nephew, Duncan, eldest son of Malcolm III., by his first wife, Ingibjorg, daughter of Earl Finn Arnason, and widow of Thorfinn Sigurdson, Earl of Orkney. In a charter, still preserved at Durham, he styles himself "Dunecan, son of King Malcolumb, by hereditary right King of Scotia." In this king's reign the history of the Seals of Scotland begins. These seals have had considerable attention drawn to them by several writers, but no one has taken up the subject comprehensively. One of the earliest writers is James Anderson, whose *Diplomatium Scotie Thesaurus*, also known by the title of *Diplomata Scotie*, published at Edinburgh, in

probably to be attributed to the notorious John Harding, whose work is seen again on another seal presently to be mentioned. The charter to which it has been fixed is an acknowledgment by Malcolm of Edward the Confessor's overlordship, and is dated 5th June, 1065. A moment's glance at this seal will convince the merest beginner of its spurious character. The legend, if ever there was one, has been conveniently clipped away. Of this seal there are two casts among the collections in the British Museum, described in the catalogue at p. 647.

folio, in 1739, gave engraved fac-similes of royal charters, and reproduced the seals, but he gives no description of them. Thomas Astle's *Account of the Seals . . . of Scotland*, 1792, is a work of considerable value. Henry Laing, in 1850, published at Edinburgh his *Descriptive Catalogue of Impressions from Ancient Scottish Seals . . . taken from Original Charters, etc.*, and a *Supplemental Descriptive Catalogue*, in 1866, but his descriptions are confused and sometimes incorrect. In 1895, the fourth volume of the *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* was published, the contents of which included technical descriptions of the largest public collection of Scottish and Irish seals then available to research, with numerous illustrations. There are short but useful articles on the Great Seals of Scotland by Allan Wyon, F.S.A., Chief Engraver of Her Majesty's Seals, in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Vol. XLV., for 1889.

The Seal of King Duncan II., the earliest extant Great Seal, is best known from an impression, unfortunately not perfect, preserved among the numerous Scottish documents in possession of the Dean and Chapter of Durham. When perfect the seal measured about two inches and one-eighth.

On it are observed the king riding on a warhorse turned to the right. He is attired in a kind of trellised or fretty hauberk or shirt of mail; the helmet is of the conical shape in use generally at the time, and is furnished with a *nasale*, or projecting piece for protection of the nose. In his right hand the king holds a lance-flag, the pennon of which is of two points. In his left hand he holds the strap of a kite-shaped shield, but it is only seen from the interior, so that if the king at this early time bore any preheraldic device graven on his shield, this gives us no assistance in ascertaining what it may have been. The horse is furnished with a small saddle of simple form, having a high curved pommel and crupper, and across the breast carries the breast-band or poy-trail, that is, *pectoral*, and the head-harness. Of the legend only the first and last parts remain, but from Laing's suggestion for the full legend it may fairly be read thus—

SGILL[VMI . DANCANI . DEO . RECTORE . REGIS . SCOT]ORVM.

The part within brackets is not now existent on the seal. The charter to which this seal is appended is believed to be the earliest document of its kind relating to Scotland. It is dated, by internal evidence, but not specifically expressed,