

Inverness, Scotland: The City in the Highlands

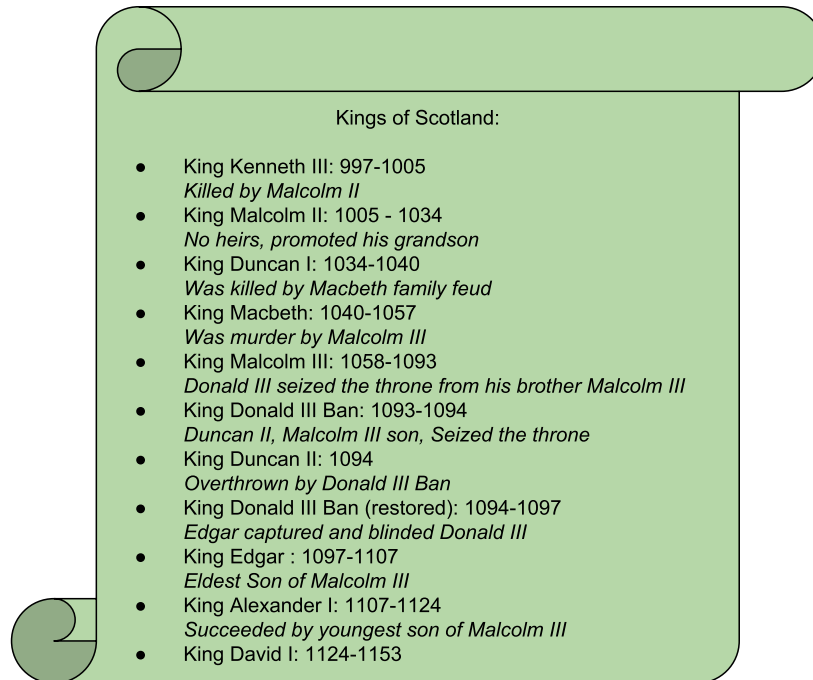
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Inverness (translates from Gaelic to mean mouth of River Ness) is known as Scotland's capital in the north dating back to the 6th century AD. The City of Inverness has a legacy of a city mirroring the dramatic changes taking place in Scotland, the violent upheavals of rebellion, clan conflicts, reformation of the church, and self-determination as a nation. Over the course of 1,500 years, the transformation of a region from a tribal celtic group to the eventuality of the creation of the United Kingdoms of Britain, transformed Scotland and the people within the Highlands.

The early history of Inverness begins with the Pictish Pagan tribe under the leadership of King Brude. Inverness was the capital of the Picts during the 6th century. The story begins when Saint Columba traveled to Inverness and met with King Brude to talk about Christianity. By the time St. Columba had left, he had successfully converted the Pict King to Christianity. Traces of King Brude's Fort or residence are marked off today in Craig Phadrig. Roughly about the same time, a legend was also born. It is said that as St. Columba was returning from his meeting with the Pictish King, he witnessed a man swimming in Loch Ness, when suddenly, the man began to panic as a creature was chasing him. St. Columba ran to the shore waving his hands, and commanded the creature to drop the man in the name of God. The creature obeyed and dived back into Loch Ness. This is the first recorded legend of the Loch Ness's Monster.¹

During the 12th century, the Pictish people no longer resided in Inverness and the region changed into what is more commonly known about the northern portion of the Scottish Highlands.

¹ It is important to note that this is only one version of the story and other stories have additional detail or information that slightly differ in the legend, but what I stated was the general understanding of what had transpired.



King Kenneth I (997-1005) was the first Royal ruler in Scotland, but the succession ruling family in Scotland was a dangerous profession as the throne was usually captured by the death or murder of the previous king. One of the more famous examples of the transition of the crown was captured in William Shakespheres play entitled *Macbeth*, where the theatrical version of the historic event is translated onto stage. In the play, Malcolm III murders his cousin Macbeth to avenge the death of his father King Duncan I, and takes the throne for himself. While Shakespere took some liberties in his retelling of the event, he did capture the violent regime changes during ancient Scotland. After Malcolm III removed his cousin from power, he proclaimed himself King of Scotland and was crowned at Scone in 1058. Scone was the first capital of Scotland until it was moved to Edinburgh in 1452.

The Town of Inverness, known as a burgh (translates from Gaelic into town) was the royal residence of King Malcolm III of Scotland, Malcolm Canmore. Although Inverness is called the ‘Capital of the Highlands in the north’, it is not the official capital, rather just a nickname because this region had the largest population of highlander clans in all of Scotland. Scotland would not remain under their own crown for long, as England was seeking to expand their territory into the region. By 1303 King Edward I of England, claimed Scotland under his rule. The English usurp of authority was met with rebellion from the Scots and played out through the First Wars of Scottish Independence (1296-1328). Castle Inverness would be the center of the turmoil taking place in Scotland and would witness the rise of one nation over another and then be once again attacked to be ruled by another nation.

Not only did Scotland battle external conflicts, but Scotland was also dealing with internal clan conflicts. During clan warfare, peace was relatively unknown as each clan vied for power, control, and territory. Two particular clans, MacDonald and Clan MacLeod, would come into constant conflict with each other. After 1493, Scotland experienced a season of

² Johnson, Ben. “Kings and Queens of Scotland” Historic UK. 2023. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofScotland/Kings-Queens-of-Scotland/> March 31, 2023

peace when King James I brought an end to the rivalry between Clan MacLeod and Clan MacDonald.³

Another conflict would arise in 1562 when Mary Queen of Scot would travel to Inverness in September. When she and her royal party arrived at the castle entrance, she was denied entry into the castle. The Queen's supporters quickly rallied to her side and laid siege to Inverness Castle. After three days the castle fell and the supporters broke in and captured the Keeper of the Castle, George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, and his supporters. The Earl of Huntly was executed, and his followers were hanged. The queen stayed at Inverness for only a couple of days before she left.

Although skirmishes broke out amongst the clans, no major conflict took place during the 1639 Civil War. The proceeding dates (1688, 1715, & 1746) would continue to disrupt peace between the two nations with the Crisis of secession and the Jacobite's desire to make the Stuart family ruler of Scotland and England. By 1746, at the conclusion of the Battle of Culloden on April 16, 1745, Scotland would be altered forever as the final rebellion of the Jacobites resulted in the end of clan life and mass exodus of the Highlands.⁴

Inverness' center in the changing times of Scotland is often outshined by the more popular City of Edinburgh and the rich history of the Royal Mile. While Inverness has had its share of history and served as a centerpiece in the transformation of the country, the city was only given city status in 2000 making it Scotland's 5th city during the millennium celebration, but Inverness already had city status dating back to 1214, (granted by King David I) making it one of the oldest Royal burgh in Scotland. Although King David I formally recognized Inverness as a city, Britain did not officially recognize Inverness until much later. What has also hampered Inverness popularity is its location. The remote terrain of the Highlands made Inverness difficult to reach by traditional means. The primary industry of the town/city was in ship making, but with the introduction of the railway, in 1855, the town/city began to experience an influx of visitors and the effects of the Industrial Revolution.

³ Reid, D. "The Violent History of Inverness Castle" Culloden Battlefield. Dec. 2, 2020. <https://cullodenbattlefield.wordpress.com/2020/12/02/a-violent-history-of-inverness-castle/> March 31, 2023.

⁴ This is a very short snap shot of events that had taken place in Scotland, and I encourage you to conduct your research to find additional information upon the history of Scotland. The point of the guide is to provide a brief history of places to see and the short history behind the city, people, and historical structures in the region.