

# KING ALEXANDER I

BURIED IN

# DUNFERMLINE ABBEY



ALEXANDER I (1107 - 1124)



Alexander I.

Walter de Gray Birch (1842-1924). *History of Scottish seals*. 2 volumes. Stirling, 1905-07.

Extracted from -

THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCOTLAND

By James Taylor D.D. London 1859 Vol.1. p. 59.

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JOHN OF FORDUN'S

CHRONICLE

OF

THE SCOTTISH NATION

VOLUME 2. p. 217

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Alexander I  
The Fierce



[1107-1124] son of Malcolm Canmore, who soon after his accession, the existing amity with England was strengthened by the marriage of Alexander with the Lady Sibilla, one of the numerous illegitimate daughters of Henry I. Such an alliance, Lord Haile remarks, was not held dishonourable in those days. The extent of Alexander's territorial dominions, however, was lessened by the separation of Cumberland, which Edgar, on his deathbed, had bequeathed to his youngest brother David. Alexander at first disputed the validity of the acquiesce; but, as David was supported both by the English barons and by Henry, he found himself obliged to acquiesce in the settlement.<sup>1</sup>

The leading event of Alexander's reign was the struggle which he maintained for the independence of the Scottish Church against the pretensions of the English archbishops. Turgot, a monk of Durham, and the confessor of the late Queen Margaret, had been appointed by Alexander to the bishopric of St Andrews, A.D. 1109, but his consecration was delayed for two years, in consequence of a dispute respecting the right of performing the ceremony. This privilege was claimed both by the Archbishop of Canterbury and of York, while the king and the Scottish clergy denied that it belonged to either. The dispute was on this occasion terminated by a compromise, which left the point unsettled.

On the death of Turgot, in 1115, the see remained vacant for five years. At length, in 1120, Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury, was appointed to the bishopric. The dispute concerning the right of consecration was immediately renewed, and the English prelates used every effort to obtain the recognition of their assumed authority over the clergy of Scotland. But Alexander steadily resisted their pretensions, and vindicated, with complete success, the freedom and independence of the Scottish church.

This contest lasted for fourteen years, and Alexander did not long survive its termination. He died on the 27th of April 1124, about two years after the death of his queen, who had brought him no issue. He is traditionally remembered by the epithet of the "Fierce," according to Wyntown, on account of the vigour and promptitude with which he quelled an insurrection of the Moraymen, and punished them for their rapine;<sup>1</sup> or rather, perhaps, as Lord Hailes supposes, from his imperious and passionate disposition.

The resolute manner in which he maintained the rights and privileges of the Scottish church shows him to have been possessed of undaunted courage, and great firmness of character. "He was humble and courteous to the clergy," says a contemporary writer, "but to the rest of his subjects terrible beyond measure; high-spirited, always endeavouring to compass things beyond his power; (he does not appear, however, to have ever been foiled in any of his undertakings); not ignorant of letters, zealous in establishing churches, collecting relics,

<sup>1</sup> Hailes's Annals, vol. i. p. 54, and note.

and providing vestments and books for the clergy; liberal even to profusion, and taking delight in the offices of charity to the poor."<sup>1</sup> On the death of Alexander, David his brother, the youngest son of Malcolm Canmore and Margaret, ascended the throne.

#### **JOHN OF FORDUN'S CHRONICLE - CHAPTER XXVIII. P.217.**

##### *Accession of Alexander, surnamed Fers - His character.*

HE (Edgar) was succeeded by his brother Alexander, surnamed Fers (fierce), in the year 1107 - the first of the emperor Henry V, who wedded Matilda, this Alexander's niece, and daughter of Henry, king of England, and the good Queen Matilda. Henry held the empire twenty years; and King Alexander reigned seventeen. Now the king was a lettered and godly man; very humble and amiable towards the clerics and regulars, but terrible beyond measure to the rest of his subjects; a man of large heart, exerting himself in all things beyond his strength. He was most zealous in building churches, in searching for relics of saints, in providing and arranging priestly vestments and sacred books; most open-handed, even beyond his means, to all new comers; and so devoted to the poor that he seemed to delight in nothing so much as in supporting them, washing, nourishing, and clothing them. For, following in his mother's footsteps, he vied with her in pious acts so much that, with regard to three churches - Saint Andrew's church at Kilremont, to wit, and the churches of Dunfermline and Scone, one of them founded by his father and mother, and the other founded and erected by himself at Scone, the chief seat of government, in honour of the Holy ~Trinity and the Archangel Saint Michael - he endowed them with offerings so many and so great, that his descendants rather impoverished them than added unto them; save that his illustrious successor and brother David kept them in good condition, and by his gifts raised Dunfermline especially - where he himself also rests - and enlarged it by fresh buildings. Alexander also founded the monastery of Canons of the island of Emonia (Inchcolm), by Inverkeithing). He it was who bestowed the Boar's Chase upon the blessed Andrew. He it was, likewise, who gave so many privileges to the aforesaid church of the Holy Trinity at Scone. He had founded and built it on the spot where both the Scottish and Pictish kings had whilom established the chief seat of government; and when constructed with a framework of stone, acceding to the custom of that time, he had had it dedicate - to which dedication by strict order of the king nearly the whole kingdom flocked. The church, indeed, with

<sup>1</sup> Wyntown's Chronicle vol. i. p. 283; "He was callit the Feirse or Strenthie, because he as ane gritt punisser of malefactoris and evil doaris. He dantonit Murray and Ross that had rebellit, and causit hang the Lord of Mernis, puir wyff." David Chalmers' Chronicle, p. 56.

all its pertinents, he freely made over, God so ordering it, to the governance of canons-regular called from the church of Saint Oswald at Nostle (Nastlay, near Pontefract), and of the others after them who should serve god, until the end of the world.

1115 Royal Gifts to Dunfermline Church, Sibilla, the Queen bequeathed Beeth, and also mortified to it her lands of Clunie. (Chalmers p. 36)

Below Docketoun on the north brink of Or, is Clunies, which has been a good house, and pleasantly situate, but now ruinous. These lands were mortified to the monastery of Dunfermling by Sibilla, Alexander I's queen; and the monks feued them to Duncan Earl of Fyfe in Alexander III's time. The Earls of Fyfe kept these lands till their forfeiture by king James I, by which they returned to the monastery of Dunfermling: and anno 1437, they feued them to Sir David Stuart of Rosyth; but in king James III's time, Stuart of Rosyth disposed them to David Crichton of Cranston-riddel, a cadet of the Lord Crichton; his posterity enjoyed this estate till Charles II's time, that the Duke of Rothes purchased them, and they are now a part of the earldom of Rothes. (History of Fife by R. Sibbald p. 377.)

“A thousand a hundyr twenty and foure,  
The yheris if Grace were past oure;  
The Kyng Alysawndyr in Strevylyng,  
Deyed, and wes browcht till Dwnfermlyn;  
Quhare he wes wyth gret honoure,  
Enteryed in halawyed Sepulture.” &c.

(Wynton's "Orygynale Cronikil of Scot." V. ii. p. 281)

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