A History of Scotland

The transformation of the Dark Age kingdom of the Picts to modern independence.
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The Last of the Free (AD 84 - 943)

A History of Scotland begins with the first stirrings of identity as the tribes of a place the Romans called Caledonia first banded together to confront the legions of the Empire. From this emerged a people with a new name, the Picts, the last British tribe to paint their bodies.

Hammers of the Scots (1214 - 1305)

How did war with England transform the kingdom of Alba into the newly emerging nation of Scotland? As tragedy hit a succession of Scottish kings, King Edward of England gained the upper hand. However, a popular uprising led by William Wallace fought back.

Bishop Makes King (1306 - 1332)

With Wallace dead and the Scottish king broken in a foreign land, Scotland seemed dead. But Scotland’s bishops had the power to support a new king. They chose Robert Bruce, who murdered his opposition and harnessed the power of Scottish patriotism.

Language is Power (1411 - 1503)

It’s a common perception that Scotland has always had a split identity, but is this true? The split had its origins in a feud between two families. The Macdonalds backed Bruce and the rewards had flowed. However, the King of Scotland, James Stewart, was ransomed from the English and was a man in a hurry to impress.

Project Britain (1543 - 1603)

This episode focuses two widely contrasting visions of Britain. Mary Queen of Scots had expected to be Queen of France, Scotland and England. Her choice of husbands led to her abdication and she fled into Elizabeth I’s custody. Her son James grew up under the power of a violent tutor, but he escaped from his shackles, and he too coveted the English throne.

God’s Chosen People (1638-1688)

After Great Britain was founded, the Scots found themselves torn between loyalty to the ancient line of Stuart monarchs and their religious conviction. When Charles I tried to impose his form of religion on the Scots, they were forced to choose, resulting in the British Civil Wars, the execution of Charles I and Cromwell’s conquest of Scotland.

Let’s Pretend (1693-1750)

How did the 1688 revolution bring William of Orange to power in England and Scotland, leading to the most iconic of all Scottish battles, Culloden? The Glorious Revolution was triumphed as a win for Protestantism over Catholicism and liberty over the power of kings, but it was not accepted by all.

The Price of Progress (1754-1783)

Money made from transatlantic trade transformed Scotland’s fortunes. It was a national triumph, but led others to fear that Scotland had lost its way. A few Jacobites made their fortune by ‘playing the markets’, and used their new money to become slave owners.

This Land is Our Land (1815-1886)

Sir Walter Scott’s romantic tartan image of Scotland was born of his fear that dangerous revolutionaries in industrial towns would sweep away everything distinctively Scottish. His story of doomed Jacobites and loyal Highlanders was a global success, but was it enough to protect his beloved Scotland?

Project Scotland (1919 - 2009)

The 20th century saw a period of unprecedented social, political and economic upheaval. An economic slump which devastated Scotland’s industrial heartlands, resulting in the greatest exodus of people from Scotland ever known. The rumblings about home rule, even independence, began in earnest...