

# Malcolm I of Scotland

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**Máel Coluim mac Domnaill** (anglicised **Malcolm I**) (died 954) was king of Scots (before 943 – 954), becoming king when his cousin Causantín mac Áeda abdicated to become a monk. He was the son of Domnall mac Causantín.

Máel Coluim was probably born during his father's reign (889–900).<sup>[1]</sup> By the 940s, he was no longer a young man, and may have become impatient in awaiting the throne. Willingly or not—the 11th-century *Prophecy of Berchán*, a verse history in the form of a supposed prophecy, states that it was not a voluntary decision that Constantine II abdicated in 943 and entered a monastery, leaving the kingdom to Máel Coluim.<sup>[2]</sup>

Seven years later, the *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* says:

[Malcolm I] plundered the English as far as the River Tees, and he seized a multitude of people and many herds of cattle: and the Scots called this the raid of Albidosorum, that is, Nainndisi. But others say that Constantine made this raid, asking of the king, Malcolm, that the kingship should be given to him for a week's time, so that he could visit the English. In fact, it was Malcolm who made the raid, but Constantine incited him, as I have said.<sup>[3]</sup>

Woolf suggests that the association of Constantine with the raid is a late addition, one derived from a now-lost saga or poem.<sup>[4]</sup>

He died in the shield wall next to his men. Máel Coluim would be the third in his immediate family to die violently, his father Donald II and grandfather Constantine I both having met similar fates 54 years earlier in 900 and 77 years earlier in 877 respectively.

In 945, Edmund I of England, having expelled Amlaíb Cuaran (Olaf Sihtricsson) from Northumbria, devastated Cumbria and blinded two sons of Domnall mac Eógain, king of Strathclyde. It is said that he then "let" or "commended" Strathclyde to Máel Coluim in return for an alliance.<sup>[5]</sup> What is to be understood by "let" or "commended" is unclear, but it may well mean that Máel Coluim had been the overlord of Strathclyde and that Edmund recognised this while taking lands in southern Cumbria for himself.<sup>[6]</sup>

The *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* says that Máel Coluim took an army into Moray "and slew Cellach". Cellach is not named in the surviving genealogies of the rulers of Moray, and his identity is unknown.<sup>[7]</sup>

Máel Coluim appears to have kept his agreement with the late English king, which may have been renewed with the new king, Edmund having been murdered in 946 and succeeded by his brother Edred. Eric Bloodaxe took York in 948, before being driven out by Edred, and when Amlaíb Cuaran again took York in 949–950, Máel Coluim raided Northumbria as far south as the Tees taking "a multitude of people and many herds of

**Malcolm I**



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**King of Alba**

<b>Reign</b>	943–954
<b>Predecessor</b>	Constantine II
<b>Successor</b>	Indulf
<b>Died</b>	954
<b>Issue</b>	Dub, King of Scots Kenneth II, King of Scots
<b>House</b>	Alpin
<b>Father</b>	Donald II, King of Scots

cattle" according to the Chronicle.<sup>[8]</sup> The Annals of Ulster for 952 report a battle between "the men of Alba and the Britons [of Strathclyde] and the English" against the foreigners, i.e. the Northmen or the Norse-Gaels. This battle is not reported by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and it is unclear whether it should be related to the expulsion of Amlaíb Cuaran from York or the return of Eric Bloodaxe.<sup>[9]</sup>

The Annals of Ulster report that Máel Coluim was killed in 954. Other sources place this most probably in the Mearns, either at Fetteresso following the Chronicle, or at Dunnottar following the *Prophecy of Berchán*. He was buried on Iona.<sup>[10]</sup> Máel Coluim's sons Dub and Cináed were later kings.

## References

1. Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, p. 177.
2. Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, p. 175; Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 444–448; Broun, "Constantine II".
3. Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 452–453.
4. Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, pp. 178–181.
5. *Early Sources*, pp. 449–450.
6. ASC Ms. A, s.a. 946; Duncan, pp. 23–24; but see also Smyth, pp. 222–223 for an alternative reading.
7. It may be that Cellach was related to Cuncar, Mormaer of Angus, and that this event is connected with the apparent feud that led to the death of Máel Coluim's son Cináedin 977.
8. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Ms. D, s.a. 948, Ms. B, s.a. 946; Duncan, p. 24.
9. *Early Sources*, p. 451. The corresponding entry in the Annals of the Four Masters, 950, states that the Northmen were the victors, which would suggest that it should be associated with Eric.
10. *Early Sources*, pp. 452–454. Some versions of the *Chronicle*, and the *Chronicle of Melrose*, are read as placing Máel Coluim's death at Blervie, near Forres.

## Further reading

For primary sources see also **External links** below.

- Anderson, Alan Orr, *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D 500–1286*, volume 1. Reprinted with corrections. Paul Watkins, Stamford, 1990. ISBN 1-871615-03-8
- Duncan, A.A.M., *The Kingship of the Scots 842–1292: Succession and Independence*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2002. ISBN 0-7486-1626-8
- Smyth, Alfred P. *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80-1000*. Reprinted, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998. ISBN 0-7486-0100-7

## External links

- CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts at University College Cork includes the *Annals of Ulster*, *Tigernach*, *the Four Masters* and *Innisfallen*, the *Chronicon Scotorum*, the *Lebor Bretnach* (which includes the *Duan Albanach*), Genealogies, and various Saints' Lives. Most are translated into English, or translations are in progress.
- (CKA) The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba
- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle XML Edition by Tony Jebson and translated at the OMACL

Preceded by <b>Causantín mac Áeda</b>	<b>King of Scots</b> 943–954	Succeeded by <b>Ildulb mac Causantín</b>
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