

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT The Stone of Destiny

Located in Westminster Abbey in London, England is a most unusual chair. It is built of solid oak planks which extend from the seat up the high back and up the sides to steeply sloping arms. The interior is plain but the outside back and sides are carved into deep panels. The two back corners extend above the arms into pole handles, while the back itself is level first from the two handles inward but then rises toward a gable peak in the center. The paneled sides extend below the seat to provide a base while the whole assembly rests on four cast iron lion feet. Beneath the seat is a shelf, and on the shelf, fit tightly up against the seat, is a very famous Stone.

All the kings and queens of England since the days of Edward I, (1272 to 1307), have been crowned sitting in that chair and on that Stone.

Or, at least that is the way it was until 1950, when circumstances took a turn.

The facing page shows a picture of the Throne.

The chair was built by Edward I to hold the Stone and to provide a proper seat for the coronation. The chair shows the wear of nearly 700 years; the planks and panels are chipped and cracked; the interior once had cloth glued to its lower section; the back is scarred with the initials and marks of royal and nonroyal graffiti.

The Stone is composed of a coarse-grained sandstone; it might have come from many places around the earth. It is fitted at each end with iron staples and rings to carry it. It is believed that Edward I attached the staples and rings.

Edward may have had reason to attach the rings. After his 1296 campaign against the rebellious Scots he brought back to England certain Scottish charters which he thought were better in his own keeping. He also brought the Holy Rood from Edinburgh, the most sacred relic in Scotland, placed there by Saint Margaret. And he brought the Stone.

The Stone had been located in the famous abbey at Scone, Scotland, a village on the north bank of the River Tay in Perthshire, the traditional seat of Scottish kings<sup>AE,HOS</sup>.

Edward's interest in the Stone was not idle. In Gaelic it was called *Lia Fail*, the Stone of Destiny. By tradition the person who was crowned sitting on the Stone had right of kingship ordained by God. By removing the Stone from Scotland, Edward removed that right. He also ensured that the right would henceforth vest in English, and not in Scottish kings.

The last Scottish king to be crowned on the Stone was Alexander III in 1249. All the kings of Scotland back to Kenneth MacAlpin in 843 had been crowned sitting on that Stone. In those days MacAlpin had located the seat of Scottish kingship in Dunkeld, farther up the River Tay, to which he carried the Stone and other holy relics from the island of Iona, home of the famous Irish priest, St. Columba. The seat of



Scottish kingship, together with the Stone, was later moved to Scone.

Kenneth MacAlpin figures prominently in Scottish history. He was the first king to rule all of Scotland. Prior to his reign Scotland was divided between the Picts and the Irish immigrants of DalRiada. The Picts were Celtic people who had migrated to the British Isles from the European continent around 600 BC, spreading across England into Wales, west into Ireland, and north into Scotland. Their language was Gaelic; they brought with them the knowledge of iron. About 300 years later another wave of Celtic people moved into England, pushing the Gaels out of the south and east into Ireland and into the north parts of Scotland. The new wave may have inhabited areas as far north as Loch Ness and the Grampian Mts. They were the Cambrian/Kymry who spoke Welsh/Brythonic<sup>KKES,ES</sup>.

The people of DalRiada were Irish Gaels who had moved from Antrim, east of the River Bann in extreme northeastern Ireland, across the north channel of the Irish Sea, to settle in Argyll near the Scottish islands of Islay and Jura. For about 100 years the name DalRiada, after one of the royal houses of Ireland, was applied to the dynastic territories in both Ireland and Scotland. This movement took place sometime in the latter part of the fifth century under Fergus Mor Mac Erc. The date is sometimes given as 464, sometimes as 501; it is not known with certainty. The Scottish DalRiada remained subject to the rule of the Irish DalRiada until about 575, when, through the influence of St. Columba, a member of the royal family, the Scottish DalRiada became an independent kingdom under King Aidan.

Kenneth MacAlpin was descended from Fergus Mac Erc and Aidan. They, in turn, were descended from Cairbre Riada who had founded the dynasty in Ireland some ten generations before. Cairbre Riada was the son of the Irish High-King Conaire, son of Mug Lama. The genealogy in the Irish king lists is carried back another five generations to another Conaire Mor, the famous “Peace King,” and again another five generations, around the time of Jesus, to a certain Dedad, from whom all branches of the Irish royal stock were descended. They were known as the Clanna Dedaid. They were of first importance in Irish traditional history, but in the historical period their power had waned. In Scotland down to the twelfth century the royal family was described as the “seed of Conair Mor<sup>ES</sup>.”

The Scottish DalRiada had gradually taken possession of Pict lands, with major conquests by Aidan, until MacAlpin finally defeated the last Pictish king and established the kingdom of Scotland which has come down to modern times. Before his time the Stone had been used at Iona by the kings of Scottish DalRiada beginning with Aidan. Prior to Aidan the Stone had been in Ireland where all Irish High-Kings were anointed and crowned sitting on the Stone. It was brought to Iona by St Columba. Its previous location in Ireland is not known, although tradition places it at Tara, ancient home of the High-Kings of Ireland<sup>KKES</sup>.

The Scot name did not originally belong to Scotland; it belonged to Ireland. The Romans knew the inhabitants of Ireland as the Scoti. The Gaelic native name was *Cruithni*; it applied to all the Gaelic people, including the Picts of Scotland. From a phonetic change in Gaelic Celtic to Welsh Celtic words beginning with “C” (K) in Gaelic were pronounced with a “P” in Welsh. Thus *cenn* became *penn*. Cruithni would then become *Prythni*. With a further change of “th” to “t” this became Prytini.

With a still further metathesis of the “ni” to “in” this became Prytin, and thus our word Britain. The Romans called all the inhabitants of Britain *Brittani*, both Welsh and Picts. Because the Cruithni and Brittani names are phonetically connected scholars surmise that the application of Brittani to all the inhabitants of Britain, the Welsh as well as the Picts, was a misapplication through ignorance back in Rome for the people of the British Isles<sup>ES</sup>. The name has stuck to this day.

Curiously the Gaelic people had traditions that their Cruithni forebears came originally from Thrace, the location of the Thraco-Kimmerians, and one track of the Iberi migrations. They first moved to France, where they founded Poitiers, and later to Ireland. This was soon after the invasion of the Gaedil, the sons of Mil, while Eremon, leader of the invasion, was still reigning in Ireland. According to the traditions Gub and his son Cathluan, rulers of the Cruithni, acquired great power but Eremon would not allow them to remain in Ireland. They were forced to move to Alba, (the ancient name for Scotland), where they became the Picts. Both Irish and Pictish Chronicles and Kings Lists which have come down to us contain common names for their early rulers, to support the oral traditions<sup>ES,KKES,IKHK</sup>. However, we do not know the times of this common rulership, whether prior to migration to the British Isles, during the first settlement in Ireland, or after the establishment of dynastic rule.

Other traditions say the Cruithni came from Scythia, and many people believe the name Scoti is merely a modified form of Scythi<sup>ES</sup>. The geographical proximity of Scythia to Thrace, confusion among ancient accounts on the two regions, the track of the Iberians near Meotis and the Crimea, and the presence of the Kimmerians in Asia Minor and in the Crimea – all lend support to these two versions of the Gaelic folk traditions. Thus we see that Ireland has a tradition of two different invasions from the descendants of the Eberi/Ibri, one through the Iberians of Spain and the sons of Mil, and another through the Cruithni who came through France from Thrace or Scythia.

It is interesting that the traditions show the Cruithni (Gaelic) Kelts arriving within a few years after the arrival of the Eberian elements from Spain.

Archeology shows that Celtic people entered the British Isles along the eastern coast of Scotland as well as England. The style of ancient stone forts on the east coast is somewhat different from those on the west coast, suggesting two different segments of people. Other archeological evidence suggests that some of the ancient Kelts may have moved from Ireland to Scotland, prior to Roman times; this movement would be the basis for the folk traditions of Scottish Cruithni coming from Ireland<sup>ES</sup>. The movement of people is complex and difficult to trace in the archeological record. Available evidence would not deny the folk traditions.

Some folk traditions are more fanciful. In another tradition Gathelus Gael, a remote ancestor, married Scota, daughter of a Pharaoh, and came to Ireland from the Mediterranean via Spain. The Gael name came from Gathelus while the Scoti name came from Scota. Gathelus brought the Stone of Destiny with him and placed it at Tara where it remained until removed by St Columba<sup>HOSA</sup>.

It is also known as Jacob’s Pillar Stone. In that version of the tradition it was the stone on which Jacob rested his head when he saw the vision of angels descending and ascending a ladder to heaven, Gen 28. When he awoke in the morning he took the stone and set it up as a pillar and memorial. He poured oil on it and called that place

Bethel, the house of God. According to this tradition Baruch, a disciple of Jeremiah the prophet, rescued the Stone from Babylonian control and brought it to Ireland along with Tea-Tephi, the daughter of Zedekiah, last king of Jerusalem. Tea-Tephi married into the Irish royal line to carry the seed of Abraham to all the kings of Ireland, Scotland and England.

The tradition of Goedhal Glas, who was saved from the serpent's bite by Moses, has parallels. His grandson Niul married Scota, a daughter of the Pharaoh. Their descendants became the Scoti of Ireland<sup>SIR</sup>. The Stone is not mentioned in this form of the tradition.

These traditions cannot all be true; perhaps none of them are.

The Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain had a tradition of coronating their kings on a stone. These ceremonies were held at Winchester and Kingston-on-the-Thames. The name Kingston means King's Stone. King Egfrith was anointed with oil on the Anglo-Saxon stone at Kingston in 785<sup>AE</sup>. During these ceremonies authority for the anointing was taken from the Old Testament, I Kings 1:39-40:

**There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent, and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split with their noise.**

Since the Anglo-Saxons also used a stone for their coronations, the Stone of Destiny is not unique, and raises doubt as to its authenticity. Sacred stones are common many places among many people. Furthermore, a stone still exists at Tara, which is thought by scholars to be the traditional one. It now rests in a recumbent position and is considerably larger than the Stone in Westminster Abbey. However, no one is sure the Tara stone is the one used for coronation purposes by ancient Irish kings; it may have served a different purpose. If the Tara stone is the traditional one it would mean that the Stone of Destiny is any old stone dug out of the ground by some forgotten person and made into the coronation stone. There is no hard evidence that would permit us to determine the authenticity one way or the other.

Still, the tradition is very strong. The Stone of Destiny may be an ordinary stone but Edward I thought it was divinely endowed. So did all kings and queens of England since that time, and so did the kings of Scotland back to Aidan. If St Columba brought it from Ireland he must also have given it similar solemn regard. Prince Charles of England is directly descended from the Scottish kings through the Stewarts, and since the Scottish kings were directly descended from the earliest Irish high-kings, going back to the time of Jesus, Charles carries the royal line of kingship. Edward I did not deprive the Scots of the blood lineage; he merely transferred the right of kingship as had St. Columba 700 years before. Edward may have had more secular political purposes in mind but St. Columba was motivated by his sense of destiny.

Who was St Columba? Why did he play such an important role? In order to more properly answer these questions we should review the tradition of high-

kingship in Ireland. St. Columba was a member of the royal family; he carried impressive credentials.

From previous discussion we know the Hebrew tribes were a loose confederation who would periodically gather to conduct common business, and who would call upon one individual, a judge, to handle their affairs during times of crisis. Similar loose confederations of Keltic tribes were established by the Kelts of Asia Minor, of France, and of Ireland. During times of crisis they also would call upon one of their tribal chiefs, or kings, to lead them. If he held this position through extended periods he became a high-king, or a king above the tribal kings. In Ireland in later times this developed into three different strata: the tribal chiefs or kings, a king of a confederation of tribes, and a king of all confederations, the high-king. This position was based on his royal credentials of aristocratic descent from earlier kingly lines. Eventually this evolved into actual kingship, where all tribal chiefs became subject to him. They did not act on matters of import without his approval. They had standing obligations to supply the high-king with men of arms, as well as other material support. The high-king became the practical ruler of Ireland, with full power and authority.

It is believed that this evolution did not become complete until the beginning of the fifth century when a member of the Irish royal line, Niall Niogiallach, (Niall of the Nine Hostages), consolidated power into his hands from the province of Connaught<sup>KKES,JKHK</sup>. However, this would not deny the practice of tribal confederations, going back to earliest Keltic times, nor the selection of a high-king above the tribal chieftains. The tradition of a high-king in remote times is very strong but the actual record is lost to historical memory.

The information we have on St. Columba is chiefly from St. Adamnan, an Irish ecclesiastic who was descended from a cousin of St. Columba, and who entered the monastery at Iona to become its abbot in 679. His biography on St. Columba contains much valuable information. According to Adamnan, Columba was born Dec. 7, 521 at Gartán, a village in the wilds of Donegal. At baptism he received the name Crimthann, (A Fox), but while still a child the name Columba, (A Dove), was given to him because of the simplicity of his character. Later in life he was known as Columcille, (Dove of the Church).

He was born into the race of the O'Donnells, and through each of his parents, could claim royal blood. His father was the great grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages, while his mother was descended from the King of Leinster. By right of birth he might himself have become high king of Ireland, but he chose the monastic life instead. This royal blood explains his great power among the nobility of Ireland and the DalRiada of Scotland. He founded numerous monasteries in Ireland and Scotland, ruins of which exist to this day.

While his character may have been simple it also carried righteous indignation. Columba had two grievances against Diarmad, the High-King at that time. In the first Columba wished to make a copy of a codex of the Psalms which had been brought back to Ireland from Rome by another priest, but he was refused permission. Not so easily deterred, he stole into the church at night to make the copy but was discovered in the act. The abbot demanded that he give up his copy but Columba refused. The

decision was referred to Diarmad who decided against Columba.

The other grievance was due to his protection of a royal relative who had killed someone at the court of the High-King at Tara. The man was dragged from his presence and put to death by orders of the King. Stung into indignation by the double affront he appealed to his kinsmen, the O'Donnells, and roused them to battle. The result was some three thousand men killed. Because of this act he was excommunicated. However, upon appeal, the excommunication was annulled on the condition that he forever leave Ireland.

He chose to become a missionary to the pagan Picts of Scotland and established himself on the island of Iona just off the Scottish coast. Rights to the island were given to him by his kinsman Conall, King of the Scottish DalRiada, and by Brude, king of the Picts, who also held interest in the island. There he built a monastery which became his base of operations for the rest of his life. He was instrumental in converting many Picts to Christianity, and is credited with creating the conditions which permitted Kenneth MacAlpin to complete conquest of Scotland 300 years later.

Although he occasionally returned to Ireland to conduct important business he could not remain there for any length of time.

From the stories we get some insight into his character. He was not to be put aside for political reasons. The codex of the Psalms was important, not only to himself, but also to other religionists. Refusal to copy it probably was based on royal interests and religious power. He would not be guided by such political interests. When he gave refuge to an accused man he expected it to be honored. But when he would not accept the decisions of the King he brought trouble and death. He was a powerful person but his obstinate temper brought him into personal danger.

What would motivate St. Columba to take the Stone from Ireland? Perhaps he felt it was not given proper respect by the Irish royalty. The fact that he could remove it suggests they no longer considered it important. He was a devout religionist and he may have been moved to carry his view of destiny to those people he felt should inherit that right. For him the Stone carried a holy respect of great antiquity. Whatever its source, he must have regarded it as a symbol of divine authority. Furthermore, his contest with Diarmad, for him, was a righteous cause, but it led him into disrespect for the King. This may have created an intent to remove that divine authority from a line of royalty he felt were callous, disrespectful of God, and hence undeserving.

The notion of a divine coronation stone is part and parcel of the social practice of kingship among the Keltic people. The one does not have meaning without the other. Therefore, the origins of Destiny Stones must go back to the origin of kingship. For the Israelite tribes this was the anointing of Saul by Samuel. For the Keltic tribes this could have been the establishment of kingship among confederated tribes. Or it might be the transference of kingship from the infiltration of Eberi people into Keltic population. But the removal of the northern ten tribes, and their infiltration into other groups, did not carry kingship. The creation of an aristocracy throughout Europe was due to noble blood, not magical stones. The kingship remained in Palestine where it was assumed by the Jews until the Babylonian conquest. Thus we can better

appreciate why the traditions of the Stone show it coming from Palestine via Baruch or Gathelus. It carried no authentic respect if it was not the stone anointed by Jacob and used in Israelite kingship.

These factors suggest that the tradition of the coronation stone is not actual history. Christian use of native traditions to convert the pagan world probably created the authority of Jacob's Pillar Stone.

If other tribes felt the need for divine approval of their kings, and if they did not possess the authentic stone, they might very well have taken another stone, anointed it, asked God's blessing on it, and used it for their coronation ceremonies. Likewise with the Stone of Destiny. It does not matter that the Stone now sitting in Westminster Abbey is the actual stone anointed by Jacob. It carries the weight of the generations and influenced the minds, not only of the royal family, but of whole realms of people. In our world today the royalty has lost its power and its destiny function. The decisions and policies of the nations have bypassed those traditional routes. The world is now under renovation. The coronation stone, and the royal lines no longer have meaning.

The importance of the Stone is the tale it tells of belief that shaped the thoughts, minds, and policies of the generations down to the present day. It served as a symbol for their view of destiny. This view was vividly expressed in the national purpose of England from the time of Edward I, her conquest of many nations of the world, and her influence on the spread of Christianity to every corner of the globe. The European nations settled in Africa, completely absorbed both North and South America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Much of this contribution came out of England and her sense of divine destiny.

We should not neglect the fact that the Stone is a pagan symbol grafted onto Christianity. It is a lingering reminder of our pagan past, but it served God's purpose in his influence of the minds of the generations. The Stone shows how deeply the people of Ireland, Scotland, and England, from the highest royalty to the lowliest common man, believed they were descended from Hebrew tribes and that they were fulfilling the role of destiny as the children of Abraham. The Stone of Destiny symbolized that fact.

Several names and linguistic phenomena struck my attention in study of Keltic evidence in the British Isles.

1) The personal name Niall, sometimes spelled Niel, Neil, and Niull, was a strong Irish surname. The name occurs repeatedly in a line of Irish kings, including Niall Noigiallach, Niall of the Nine Hostages. It is still found as a surname in France, sometimes also spelled Neal. The presence in both Keltic France and Keltic Ireland suggest that its origins are very old, dating back to centuries BC. Without question, it is regarded as a Keltic name.

But it is also a legitimate Hebrew name. It is found as a place name in Joshua 19:27. Modern versions write it as *Neiel*. Literally it means "Moved by God<sup>5272</sup>."

2) The personal name Kenneth is also thought to be of Keltic origin. It is found as Kinath in the Latin versions of the DalRiada kings list. In the Irish lists this name appears as Conadh, and in the Scottish lists as Conchad<sup>KKES</sup>. The name Kenath<sup>3675</sup> is also a legitimate Hebrew name; it means "colleague" or "companion." It is used

throughout the book of Ezra, 4:7, 5:3, and so on. It comes from the root *kanah*, “to address by an additional name,” “to give a flattering title,” or “to surname oneself.”

3) Many Irish and Scotch families are descended from royal Irish stock. Among the many Irish names are those beginning with “O.” This form comes from the Celtic “Uí” or “Ua,” meaning “son” or “descendant.” Uí Neill became O’Neill. O’Donnell, O’Connor, O’Reilly, O’Rourke, O’Flaherty, O’Dowd, O’Kevan, O’Hyne, O’Shaughnessy, and O’Clery are examples of these names.

The “Mac” form in Scotland and the “Mc” in Ireland meant “son.” MacDermott and MacDonough are examples. Loeguire mac Neill, died 463, was Loeguire son of Neill. This became a surname, MacNeill, or McNeill, as well as O’Neill.

When reading the old Irish lists orthography often buries the form of the name from modern eyes. Lenition of “b” and “m” became “v.” Domnall is spelled Douenall in many old texts, and later Donall and Donald. Eoghann became Hogan. Other illustrations are:

- mac Diarmait (Diarmad) became MacDermott
- Cholmain or Colman Mar became Coleman
- Fogartach became Fogerty
- Flannacan became Flanagan
- Muiredach or Muirchertach became Murdock
- Domnall became Donell
- Conel or Conaill became Connell
- Coemgen became Kevan
- Ciaran mac int sair became MacIntyre
- Ua Cellaig became O’Kelly Ua
- Flaithbertaig became O’Flaherty
- Cennetig became Kennedy
- And so on.

These names are all found in the genealogies of the Irish kings, descended from Niall of the Nine Hostages.

4) Earlier we saw that the word *clan* was used by the Etruscans for “son.” This means a descendent. The word *clann* or *clanis* used in both Ireland and Scotland for the tribal groupings descended from one ancestral figure: a “family,” “stock” or “race.” The dictionaries give the definition as a number of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor, or associated together, a tribe. This shows again that some Etruscan words may derive from Indo-European sources, or that the Celtic word may have been borrowed from the Etruscans. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the word is not originally Celtic; according to linguists the word is from the Latin *planta* = “sprout,” “shoot,” or “slip,” modern English *plant*. With a Gaelic sound shift from “p” to “c” this became *clantaor clan*.

5) Furious debate has raged around the name “Britain.” In Hebrew *brit* means “covenant.” Many persons have claimed that the *Britanni* were the covenanted ones. Scholars see the derivation of the name from the Cruithni and the Prytni. The confusion by the Romans on application of the names has given rise to speculation that there were actually two different names with phonetic relationship, the Cruitni and the Britanni, with the latter deriving from the Hebrew word. However, this is an

attempt to find a religious connection when the linguistic derivation is relatively simple.

6) St. Columba may have been keenly aware of his Hebrew affiliations. The island of Iona, his home for many years and final resting place, is known to us by its adjectival form, and because of a scribal mistake. In the oldest manuscripts it is given as *Ioua Insula*, where *Insula* is the Latin word for “Island,” and *Ioua* is the adjective. In later manuscripts the “u” was mistaken for an “n,” making it Iona. However this “mistake” may have been influenced by the respect accorded St. Columba by the scribes. *Iona* in Hebrew<sup>3123</sup> means “Dove,” Columba’s name in Gaelic.

The name is intriguing on other grounds. The adjective *Ioua* is from the simple “I,” pronounced “ee.” In manuscripts available to us it shows as many different spellings:

Irish: hIe, Eo, Ia, I.

Latin: Eo, Hu, Hya, Hi, Hii (Bede).

Saxon forms: Hii, Ii.

Scottish forms: Yi, Hii, Hy, I, Yona, Iona.

Monuments from Iona: Y.

In the old orthography “Y” is pronounced “ee.” The origin is simple. The Hebrew word for island is I = “ee.” Columba, being an erudite scholar of Hebrew, probably used the Hebrew word for island.

#### ADDENDUM TO THE STONE OF DESTINY

In *The Chronicles of Scotland*, Hector Boece, (translated into Scottish by John Bellenden, 1531) tells us Gathelus, the ancestor of the Scots who came to Egypt when “*in this tyme rang [reigned] in Egypt Pharo ye scourge of ye pepill of Israel*” was given Scota to wife (Scota was the daughter of a Pharaoh). “*Lang tyme he landit in ane part of Spayne callit Lusitan*” (later called Portugal). After this, he built the city of Brigance and “*callit his subditis [subjects] Scottis in honour and affecciuom of his wyiff.*” With peace, Gathelus “*sittand in his chayr of merbel within his citie.*”

In 843 A.D., Kenneth Mac Alpin was crowned on the Stone Lia Fail as the first King of the United Kingdom of the Picts and the Scots. One of his first acts as King was to found a church at Scone (near Perth, Scotland) because it was there that he had gained his principal victory over the Picts.

The Stone may have been used in the coronation ceremonies of the Irish Kingdom of Dalriada from roughly 400 AD until 850 AD, when Kenneth I, the 36th King of Dalriada, moved his capital of his expanding empire from Ireland to Scone (pronounced “scoon”) in what is now Perthshire, Scotland. The Stone was moved several times after that, and used on the remote, western island of Iona, then in Dunadd, in Dunstaffnage and finally in Scone again for the installation of Dalriadic monarchs.

King Kenneth II (d.995 A.D.) had the Stone placed on a wooden pedestal in front of the high altar of the Abbey of Scone. The ancient Abbey of Scone was destroyed in 1559 A.D. at the time of the Reformation. Today, on Moot Hill stands a stone chapel, marking the place where the Stone of Destiny had rested and where the

kings of Scotland presided over their Parliaments until Edward I of England removed the Stone to Westminster Abbey in 1296 A.D.

The Stone was last used in a coronation in Scotland in 1292, when John Balliol was proclaimed King. Four years later, in 1296, the English monarch, Edward I, infamous as the “hammer of the Scots,” and nemesis of Scottish national hero William Wallace, invaded Scotland. Among the booty that Edward’s marauding army removed was the legendary Stone, which the English king apparently regarded as an important symbol of Scottish sovereignty. The present Coronation Throne was made to house the stone in 1301.

When London was being bombed by German Luftwaffe during World War II, contingency safety plans were written up to protect the Stone. Only until the 1950’s was it revealed that the then Prime Minister of Canada was the only person outside a group numbering no more than 10 men, caretakers of the Relics at Westminster Abbey who knew where the Stone was hid. No similar plans had been made to secret away the Crown Jewels.

On Christmas eve, 1950, four young Scottish patriots named Ian Hamilton, Alan Stewart, Gavin Vernon and Kay Matheson, stole the Stone of Destiny from beneath the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. In the process they dropped the 300 pound stone and broke it. About four months later the rock was recovered from the Arbroath Abbey in Scotland, where it had been deposited by the kidnapers, and returned to the Westminster Abbey.

According to the treaty of Northampton of 1328, peace was restored between the warring neighbors of England and Scotland, and King Edward III of England promised to return the Stone to its rightful owners forthwith. But somehow the English never got around to fulfilling their end of the bargain, and the Stone of Destiny remained in London until British Prime Minister John Major, with the approval of Her Majesty the Queen, arranged for it to be returned to Scotland on November 15, 1996. It is now in Edinburgh Castle, where the “Stone of Scone” has joined other Scottish royal regalia – crown, scepter, sword and jewels – in a closely-guarded museum.

Much emotion attaches to the Stone. The Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, who have acted as the “guardian” of the Stone of Scone for 700 years, accepted with apparent reluctance the Queen’s decision to allow it to be returned to Scotland.

The illustration on the following page is a picture of the Stone as it now rests in Edinburgh castle.

Many rumors persist that the stone stolen from Westminster Abbey is not the same as the one later returned, but this is highly doubtful. Only the thieves would know for sure: and they aren’t talking. Doubts about the pedigree of the Stone are unlikely to be resolved. But few would debate the symbolic significance of restoring what is at least presumed to be the original Stone of Destiny to Scotland. Most Scots are pleased, if somewhat bemused by this unexpected turn of events, although some express reservations about the legal niceties surrounding the return of the pilfered artifact. Technically, under British law the Crown still “owns” the Stone – the assumption apparently being that, after seven centuries, possession is ten tenths of

the law. However, Her Majesty has decided to lend it permanently to her Scottish subjects, on the understanding that it can be temporarily taken back to London, whenever it might be required for future coronations.

The last time the Stone was used was in 1952 at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Whomever this hefty rock really belongs to, Her Majesty’s Canadian subjects hope that the Stone of Destiny – whether it be the fabled original or a reasonable facsimile thereof – will not be needed again for official duty any time soon.

The Stone, weighing over 300 pounds, is rectangular being about 26" in length; 16" in width; and, 10.5" in depth. Across its surface runs a crack and some chisel-marks are still visible on one or two sides. There are two large iron rings (or some rust resistant alloy), one at each end of the Stone which hang loosely from eyes, made of similar metal let into the Stone.

Regarding the Stone, Professor Odlum, a geologist at Ontario University, was intrigued with the idea that perhaps its source could be found in Palestine, as suggested by the ancient records of Ireland. Odlum discovered a stratum of sandstone near the Red Sea at Bethel in Palestine geologically the same as the Coronation Stone. British Royal geneology traces its heritage to all the Royal households throughout Europe from the Spanish Monarchy to the last Royals of Russia and the Danes, Swedes and nearly every monarch in between.

One of the most significant facts about the Coronation Stone is that no similar rock formation exists in the British Isles. Professor Totten at Yale University, after performing a thorough examination of the Stone made the following statement: *“The analysis of the Stone shows that there are absolutely no quarries in Scone or Iona where-from a block so constituted could possibly have come, nor yet from Tara.”* The sandstone in Scotland and Ireland is dissimilar to the Stone.

