

# The Men of the North: The Britons of Southern Scotland

Tim Clarkson



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The North Britons are the least-known among the inhabitants of early medieval Scotland. Like the Picts and Vikings they played an important role in the shaping of Scottish history during the first millennium AD but their part is often neglected or ignored. This book aims to redress the balance by tracing the history of this native Celtic people through the troubled centuries from the departure of the Romans to the arrival of the Normans. The fortunes of Strathclyde, the last-surviving kingdom of the North Britons, are studied from its emergence at Dumbarton in the fifth century to its eventual demise in the eleventh. Other kingdoms, such as the Edinburgh-based realm of Gododdin and the mysterious Rheged, are examined alongside fragments of heroic poetry celebrating the valour of their warriors. Behind the recurrent themes of warfare and political rivalry runs a parallel thread dealing with the growth of Christianity and the influence of the Church in the affairs of kings. Important ecclesiastical figures such as Ninian of Whithorn and Kentigern of Glasgow are discussed, partly in the hope of unearthing their true identities among a tangled web of sources. The closing chapters of the book look at how and why the North Britons lost their distinct identity to join their old enemies the Picts as one of Scotland's vanished nations.

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