

The Book of Facts for the Scots, Irish, and other Celts is certainly a book that will educate and inspire anyone who has Celtic ancestry or wishes to increase their knowledge of the Scottish, Cornish, Irish and Welsh cultures and histories.

**THE BOOK OF FACTS ABOUT
SCOTS, IRISH, AND OTHER CELTS:
The Celtic nations have shaped our world and
maybe they have shaped you.**

By Rickey Pittman

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THE BOOK OF FACTS
ABOUT
SCOTS, IRISH, AND OTHER
CELTS



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and maybe they have shaped you.

RICKEY PITTMAN

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Chapter One: Kings and Queens and Other Notables

Cruithne son of Cing is known as the **father of the Picts** and said by many to be their first king.

The **first king of the Scots** traditionally is Kenneth I MacAlpin. Charles II is said to be the last monarch to be crowned in Scotland, at Scone in 1651.

In the past, Ireland had **kings galore**. As in other mythologies, earthly Irish kings were often in conflict with immortals (who were often fighting among themselves). For example, Cúchulainn, the Hound of Ulster, slew 130 kings at the Hill of Focherd in a decisive battle.

Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland from 1306-1329, did not achieve his rule easily. The Cumming Clan was his strongest competition. On February 10, 1306, Bruce murdered clan Lord, John the Red Cumming at the Church of the Grey Friars in Dumfries.

Mary Queen of Scots was married three times—to Frances II, King of France; Henry Stewart, Lord of Darnley; James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Her only child was King James I, who commissioned the 1611 King James Bible. It is said Mary was quite fond and skillful at playing billiards.

Queen Mary had four Ladies in Waiting—Mary Beaton, Mary Seton, Mary Fleming, and Mary Livingston—and they were her closest friends. There is a beautifully sad ballad, “Mary Hamilton,” that is loosely and fictionally based on a handmaid who served a queen of Scotland.

King James Charles Stuart VI was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots. Born in Edinburgh Castle, he was declared King of Scotland in 1567 at the age of 13, and then King of England and Ireland 1603-1625. He ruled Scotland for over 57 years, longer than any previous monarch.

King James had some notable **literary achievements**. He is responsible for ordering and sponsoring the King James Authorized Version of the Bible, the most printed book in world history. James was actually a literate ruler, writing *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilikon Doran* in which he explained his theories on kingship and government. He also wrote a treatise, *Some Rules and Cautions to Be Observed and Eschewed in Scottish Prosody* at the age of 14 in Scots Gaelic. James was a poet and a patron of Scottish court poets and musicians.

Ireland is said to have around **150 kings** at one time! Perhaps the most famous Irish King was the High King **Brian Boru**, who unified Ireland against Viking invaders. Bryan Boru is said to have played the harp. The harp that traditionally belonged to him is on display in Trinity College. The O'Briens of Ireland are Bryan Boru's descendants. Brian Boru is immortalized in legend, music, films and literature.

Charles Edward Stuart, known as the Young Pretender and romanticized in popular culture as Bonnie Prince Charlie, led the failed Jacobite Uprising in 1745. The "Skye Boat Song" tells of Charlie's escape disguised as a woman (an Irish maid named Betty Burke) with the help of Flora MacDonald. The popular children's song, "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," tells of the Scottish desire for Prince Charlie's return. It was recorded by the Beatles with Tony Sheridan in 1964.

Llewellyn, Prince of Wales, was the last Welsh sovereign before the land was conquered by England. When his army was defeated by King Edward, Llewellyn was killed at the Battle of Irfon Bridge December 11 A.D. 1282, and his head removed and sent to London. His young daughter **Gwenllian** was taken from her cradle and sent to a convent where she was a captive for the rest of her life. She is a heroine in Wales and honored in poetry and song. Gwenllian's male cousin suffered a worse fate. King Edward ordered him shut up each night in a wooden box like a mouse.

William Shakespeare's **MacBeth** was an actual king of Scotland. His name was made famous by Shakespeare's play. It is believed to be a cursed play, so to avoid saying its name out loud and inviting trouble, it is referred to as "The Scottish Play."

The movie, ***The Last King of Scotland***, starring Forest Whitaker, was based on a novel with the same title by Giles Foden.

Cornwall also had her kings. In Cornwall, one may see **King Doniert's Stone**, supposedly the remains of the grave for a 9th century Cornish king, who drowned in the river Fowey while hunting and whose name is engraved on the stone in Latin.

There were a few **Irish kings whose name was Cormac**. There was Cormac MacArt, King of Ireland from A.D. 213-253. The forty years of his reign were said to be a splendid example of the Heroic Period of Ireland. He composed the *Psalter of Tara*. The Library of Ireland website says that he built the chief palace at Tara. He died from a salmon bone sticking in his throat.

There was **Cormac Mac Cárthaigh**, King of Munster and great grandson of Brian Boru. Cormac's Chapel. The Ask About Ireland website says that it was built in A.D. 1134 in Cashel County and that the heavily decorated chapel was named after Cormac who commissioned it. There is a sarcophagus in the chapel that supposedly hold's Cormac's brother. The American novelist Cormac McCarthy renamed himself after this King Cormac.

And there was **Cormac MacCullinan**, born about A.D. 837 was a Bishop who created the *Psalter of Cashel*. The book contained the history of Ireland from early beginnings to the 11th century. He later became King of Cashel. He was known as one of the greatest scholars of the Gaelic world and skilled in several languages including Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Gaelic and northern European languages. As King he led his armies into battle, was killed at the Battle of Ballaghmoon and his head cut off.

Flann Sinna was a High King of Ireland AD. 879-916, famous for his victory at the Battle of Ballaghmoon in A.D. 908. He was married to either two or three women and had seven sons and one-three daughters. One of his wives was the daughter of a Pictish king. He was served by the Chief Poet of Ireland, one of the writers responsible for *The Book of Invasions*. This poet wrote a praise poem, *Flans for Éirin (Flann over Ireland)*.

Niall of the Nine Hostages received his unusual name because as king he once received hostages from the five provinces of Ireland and four hostages from other regions such as Scotland. One Irish poet credits him with seven raids on Britain and another poet says he even traveled to the alps.

The *Ancient History Encyclopedia* online provides an interesting legend about an Irish king, **Niall of the Nine Hostages**. According to the legend, “Niall and his brothers were out hunting one day when they encountered an old woman by a well. She refused to give them any water unless they each kissed her. Three of the brothers refused and one only gave her a quick peck on the cheek, but Niall kissed her fully on the lips and found her transformed into a beautiful goddess. She rewarded him by granting him kingship of Ireland which would be passed on to his descendants for generations.”

Scottish kings and Queens liked to dress well. The *Royal Collection Trust* website says their clothing “conveyed important messages about wealth, gender, age, social position, marital status and religion.” Garments could be made with fabric made with expensive gold-wrapped thread and stitched with hundreds of pearls. Garments were often made of silk and richly embroidered. The Stuarts were at the forefront of these fashions. One particularly interesting piece of royal jewelry was the Lennox or Darnley Locket. It was a gold, heart-shaped locket set with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. Members of rulers’ courts strove to imitate, impress, and compete with rivals by their novel dress—some even to the point of bankruptcy.

Politics in Scotland were brutal and often bloody. The **Black Dinner** took place in November of A.D. 1440. Stacy Conratt in the online publication of *The Week* says that 16-year-old Earl of Douglas and his younger brother David were invited by Sir William Crichton to join the ten-year-old King of Scotland, King James II for dinner at Edinburgh Castle. The children were all enjoying the food and entertainment when the head of a black bull was dropped on the table, symbolizing the death of the Black Douglas Clan. The two young Douglas boys were dragged outside and beheaded. This event inspired George Martin's Red Dinner Massacre of the Starks in the *Game of Thrones*.

James, the Black Douglas, is said by the *Castle Hunter* website to be the most feared knight in Scottish history. A captain of Robert the Bruce, he was also known as the "Good Sir James" for his loyalty and support of Bruce and his war for Scottish Independence. He was such a feared and brutal soldier that he had the reputation of being fiercer than any demon in hell.

Robert Burns was the first person to feature on a commemorative bottle of **Coca-Cola**. The poet's image appeared on around one million bottles in 2009, celebrating the 250th anniversary of Burns' birth and part of the national Homecoming Scotland campaign. The bottles are now a Coca-Cola collectible.

Chapter Two: Castles, Artifacts, and Monuments

Blackness Castle was built on the shores of the Forth in the 15th century by the Crichtons, an ancient and powerful Scottish Clan. The castle has served as a royal castle, a fortress, a state prison and an ammunition depot in the 19th century. It has been featured in several films, including *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018), the BBC production of *Ivanhoe*, the *Outlaw King* (2018), and *Outlander*.

According to the *Frontier Partisans* website, **Hermitage Castle** in the Borderlands was the guardhouse of the bloodiest valley in Britain. Built around A.D. 1240 by a Norman lord of wicked murderous reputation. The castle was reportedly haunted by a murderous Robin Redcap written about by Sir Walter Scott.

The *Castle Hunter* website list these castles as **haunted castles** in Scotland: Repentance Tower, Almond Castle, New Slains Castle (an inspiration to Bram Stoker for *Dracula*), Threave Castle, and Buckholm Castle. Each of these castles has its own tales of horror.

Crichton Castle at the head of the River Tyne was built by John de Crichton in the 14th century as a family residence. It was featured in Walter Scot's *Marmion* and used as a film location in *Rob Roy* (1995) and the *Wicker Tree* (2011). The castle is now in ruins.

The **Stone of Scone**, also known as the Stone of Destiny, used for centuries for the coronation of monarchs in Scotland. A legend says it was brought to Scotland from Ireland and used as the traveling altar of Saint Columba. Another legend says that the stone was Jacob's pillow, the night God spoke to him in a dream. In 1296, Edward I of England removed the stone to Westminster Abbey. The stone was returned to Scotland to Edinburgh Castle.

If one kisses the **Blarney Stone**, also known as the Kissing Stone, in Ireland's Blarney Castle, he or she is said to receive the "gift of gab."

The kissing ritual requires the smoocher to lean backwards over the edge of the parapet's edge. Some say the stone is Jacob's Pillow, King David's Stone of Ezel, or a stone brought back from the Crusades. Whatever its origin, tourists arrive in great numbers to kiss it.

The **Rock of Doon** is in Co. Donegal. This was where Irish O'Donnell chieftains were inaugurated. It is also the location of a Holy Well possessing the power to heal and bless. Here is also the Mass Rock, where Catholics held secret mass in the days when Catholics were persecuted if they practiced their religion.

A **cairn** is a mound of rough stones built as a memorial or landmark. Scotland has numerous cairns. There are several cairns one can see in Scotland. In Dunning, there is a twenty-foot cairn topped by a cross to commemorate the burning of Maggie Wall in 1657 for the crime of witchcraft. Near Inverness, one can see the Clava tomb cairns and standing stones featured in *Outlander* when Claire steps back in time. At his ancient place, one can also see the kerb or ring type cairns and stone circles common in Celtic lands.

Cawdor Castle is the ancestral home of the Campbells and was built in the 14th century and annually draws thousands of tourists, though its connection with Macbeth is fiction. It is well known for its fabulous gardens.

Duart Castle on the Isle of Mull has been the seat of Clan MacLean for over 700 years. Some say it is the ideal Scottish castle. It was originally built in the 13th century by Clan MacDougal before it passed into the hands of the MacLeans. It was bombarded in the first Jacobite uprising in 1719 by the Royal Navy. The castle has been used as a location in several films.

Three sea lochs meet at the island where 13th century Castle **Eilean Donan** sits. It is named after Saint Bishop Donan who came to Scotland in A.D. 580. It is one of the most visited sites in Scotland and many have declared it the most beautiful castle in Scotland.

The ruins of **Castle Tioram** (pronounced *cheerum*) rest on a tidal island, Eilean Tioram. Like other castles in the Highlands, it suffered much damage from war.

Kisimul Castle rests on the Isle of Barra. It was the seat of the Clan Macneil. It is known as the “Castle in the Sea.” The Macneils were a seafaring clan and claimed Irish descent from Niall of the Nine Hostages.

Maclean’s Cross is a ten-foot, elaborately carved cross along the Street of the Dead near Iona Abbey. It was made in the 15th century and stands at a point where three paths meet and likely served as a place of prayer for travelers. A Maclean chieftain paid for the cross.

The **Kildalton Cross** is on the Isle of Islay and it is considered to be one of the finest examples of the Celtic Cross in Scotland. It is nearly nine feet in height and was created in the 8th century and features images such as the Virgin and Child and David fighting a lion, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, and Cain slaying Abel.

The **Isle of Islay** (pronounced eye-leh) is known for its Singing Sands Beach, the Carraig Fhada Lighthouse, the American Monument, built in 1920 by the American Red Cross to commemorate the loss of two troop ships in 1918, its herds of wild goats, and its peaty single malt whiskies from its eight or nine active distilleries.

Castle Sween is thought to be the oldest castle on the Scottish mainland. It was built in the 12th century and occupied for 500 years. The castle takes its name from Irish chieftain Sven the Red and ancestor of the MacSweens.

The tallest and largest church in Ireland is **St. Patrick’s Cathedral**, founded in A.D. 1191, and is the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland. Its many stained-glass windows are meant to be educational and should be read from bottom to top. Some of the windows were

made in Wales. One window is called, *Saint Patrick's Window* and tells the life of Saint Patrick in 39 episodes.

One **window** in Saint Patrick's Cathedral was made in 1906 by the Irish Artist Sarah Purser, who was part of the Irish Arts Movement. It is a depiction of **King Cormac of Cashel** and is dedicated to the Irish men who died in the Boer War.

The 16th century **Phantassie Dovecote** in Scotland is National Trust for Scotland historical structure. Dovecoats were nesting homes for doves where birds were kept for food, eggs, and dropping fertilizer. This one is a beehive dovecoat with four-foot walls and 56 feet in circumference with 544 nesting boxes.

St. Martin's Kirk in Haddington, Scotland is known for its architectural curiosities such the square holes on its walls. This medieval church was built in the mid-twelfth century. It is thought that John Knox attended services here in his childhood.

Ireland has over 250 **Holy Wells**, dedicated to male and female saints. These wells are places of prayer, spiritual devotion, and annual celebrations. *Old Moore's Almanac* claims that there are around 3,000 pre-Christian holy wells in Ireland.

Scotland also possesses a large number of **Holy Wells** with many of them holding powers of healing. The *Scotsman* in its article, "7 Magic Wells of Scotland," says *Clootie Well* on the *Black Isle* has been known to cure sickness since A.D. 620 and is associated with Saint Boniface. The Reformation viewed the wells as places of superstition and incarcerated many of those who dared to visit them.

The **Abbey of Kells** was home for the *Book of Kells* for many years. Tradition says it was founded by Saint Columba around A.D. 554. The abbey was raided repeatedly by Vikings. The abbey includes a 10th century, 90-foot round tower. From the tower's five windows, one can view the five roads leading into Kells. The monastery also has 9th and

10th century High Crosses. The tower and crosses are a National Monument of Ireland.

According to *Irish Central News* and *SiLive.com*, from 1846-58 Great **Famine Irish immigrants were buried in unmarked graves**. Three markers identify the burial sites on Staten Island. The stone markers say: In memory of the innocent victims of the Irish Hunger 1846-1851. Seven thousand were buried at Silver Lake Golf Course Irish Memorial Site. Thousands of diseased Irish were housed and died in Staten Island's Marine Hospital and Quarantine House. There is a National Great Hunger Commemoration held on the third Sunday in May.

Though Scotland has over 600 **Holy Wells** throughout the country, there are several in the Highlands worthy of mention, each with its own history, guardian, ritual requirements, and specific ailments and blessings offered to those who visit and drink the water. The *True Highlands* website mentions these: Skye has its *Loch Siant Well*, guarded by a sacred trout. The *Well in the Grey Wood* is a pin well, requiring those who taste it to drop a piece of metal into the water. On an ancient cattle trail there is the *Cheese Well*, requiring travelers to offer a bit of cheese (now coins) for protection against the fairies.

Maelrhuba's Well on *Isle Maree* is named for an Irish saint who founded a monastery nearby. The site was previously the site where Druids offered sacrifices. The well was especially known to help cure lunatics, who not only had to drink the water, but be bound, thrown from a boat and towed around the island three times. Then the healed(?) was required to leave a coin offering. Queen Elizabeth visited here in 1877 and left a coin behind. (*True Highlands*) We should not read too much into her offering!

There were 120 **Round Towers** constructed in Medieval Ireland, with two in Scotland and one on the Isle of Man. They were originally bell towers. They are found near churches or monasteries. They are 50-100 feet in height with windows at the top. There is a door about six feet or

so above ground level that could be accessed by a ladder. There were two or more wood floors inside that were accessed by ladders.

The **Tullaherin Round Tower** has a unique history. For decades, people who visit the tower would have contests to throw their walking sticks up into the top of the 73-foot-high roofless tower. During renovations, several walking sticks were found at the top.

According to *Atlas Obscura*, though **St. Michan's Church** in Dublin has an interesting history, one fact about stands out: its basement holds dozens of **mummies**. Some of the coffins are disintegrating and some of the mummies (two women and two men) are totally visible. Others are partially visible. The church also holds the coffins of the Sheare brothers who were executed and drawn and quartered for being a part of the Rising of 1798 and Robert Emmet an Irish rebel killed in 1803. However, the crypt was broken into in 2019 and some of the bodies were desecrated.

The **Burghead Holy Well** has proven itself to be an archaeological site. The *True Highlands* website says the monument was discovered in the 19th century. A flight of steps led to an underground chamber and a large pool fed by springs. No one knows who built it or why. It is believed Saint Columba sanctified the well and used it as a baptistry.

The **Hill of Tara** in County Meath was the seat and residence of the High Irish Kings and the place where they were inaugurated. From the hill it is said that one can see a quarter of Ireland. The Stone of Destiny the *Lia Fail*, which is also called “the Speaking Stone” or “the Fatal Stone” is there. It is a carved standing stone. This coronation stone was said to shout or roar with joy at the touch of the chosen king. Cúchulainn is said to have split the stone in anger.

Atlas Obscura says the **Famine Memorial Sculpture** in Dublin was created by Rowan Gillespie in 1997 and is one of the most photographed sculptures in Ireland. It shows a starving group of famine victims trudging along the river with expressions of sadness and

despair. (and a starving dog as well. It's a memorial for the thousands who emigrated from Ireland because of the Great Famine. It's built on the departure site of the *Perseverance*, one of the first famine ships to leave Ireland in 1846. A nearby ship is set up as a famine museum.

The Cross of the Scriptures in the monastery of Clonmacnoise is a thirteen-foot Clare sandstone Irish High Cross near Athlone, Ireland. It has an inscription on it that asks for prayers for the Flann Sinna, King of Ireland and Abbot Colmán who commissioned it. The surface of the cross is divided into panels having several scriptural scenes of the thought to be of the Crucifixion, the Last Judgment, and Christ with Peter and Paul in the Tomb. A replica replaced the original, which was moved into the Visitors Center in 1991 to preserve it.

Offaly County's tourist website says that the 6th century **Monastery of Clonmacnoise** on the banks of the Shannon River in Ireland is home to three high crosses, seven churches and two round towers. It was founded by Saint Ciarán, who had studied under Saint Finian.

The **Nigg Stone** in a parish church is said to be one of the finest surviving examples of Pictish carved stones, dating to the 8th century.

In Cornwall, in Minions on Bodwin Moor, there are three **stone circles** called The Hurlers. Legends say the stones there were people petrified for playing the game of hurling on the Lord's Day.

Roma-built Scottish **Distance Slabs** have been found along the Antonine Wall in Scotland. The Antonine Wall webpage says the slabs were ornately engraved and inscribed by the Legions to record their achievements in the construction of the wall. The Bridgeness Slab made by the Second Legion is considered to be the most detailed and best preserved of the Distance Slabs. It is preserved in the National Museum of Scotland. Several others can be viewed in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, which has a wonderful display of slabs and artifacts related to the Antonine Wall: Rome's Final Frontier.

In addition to the Three Hurlers, there are other ancient and massive **monuments in Cornwall** including the Merry Maidens, a Bronze Age nineteen-stone circle; the two standing stones of the Pipers of Boleigh; and the Nine Maidens Stone Row. It is said that the nine stones were nine girls turned to stone for daring to dance on the Sabbath.

Dublinia is a Viking and Norman museum in Dublin, Ireland. Films and exhibits focus on medieval life. Unique exhibits include a medieval outhouse, a Black Plague room, stocks, crafts, and many displays and interactive activities for children. The museum has a 96-step medieval tower to climb and artifacts from the Wood Quay excavations that began in 1974.

Cornwall also has the ***Saint Breock Downs Monolith***, a sixteen-ton, 10-foot tall Bronze Age quartz and granite stone. Sites like this makes one wonder how ancient peoples managed to construct these monuments.

The unique and mysterious circular **Men-an-Tol** in Western Cornwall is said in local folk legends to possess the power to heal some ailments of those who pass through its circle.

Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin is an infamous prison that once held women, children, and Irish rebels. It was a working and silent prison, meaning prisoners must complete their repetitive tasks in complete silence. Almost every Irish Republican leader was sent there at one time or the other. Many were executed. Joseph Plunkett was one of the leaders. He had just married his fiancée in the prison seven hours before he was shot. The prison now is a museum with guided tours and a tea house.

There are 206 **lighthouses in Scotland** and the Isle of Man. The Beacon Lighthouse is Scotland's first and oldest lighthouse and it was constructed in 1636 on the Isle of May. Its top beacon was fueled by coal.

At Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland is a giant stone obelisk known as the **Knockagh Monument**. It stands on a high hill as a tribute to Irish soldiers from County Antrim who served in World War I and World War II. It stands 110 feet high and took 14 years to complete. There are three moving inscriptions on the monument.

The **Bell Rock Lighthouse** off the coast of Angus is the oldest surviving sea-washed lighthouse in Scotland and it was constructed in 1810. Scottish engineer Robert Stevenson spearheaded its construction. There was a great need for the lighthouse as many ships were wrecked at this location every year. The lighthouse has been immortalized in Alistair McDonald's song, "The Mermaid's Tale," and in R. M. Ballantyne's novel *The Lighthouse*.

Archaeologists stay busy in Scotland. A Pictish longhouse was discovered and a **1,100-year-old Alfred the Great coin** was discovered at a site of an ancient fort by archaeologists from the University of Aberdeen.

A **Broch** is an ancient stone Scottish structure. These are round stone towers with an inner and outer wall. They are found in the Highlands and on the Orkney, Shetland, and Hebrides islands. At least 700 brochs are known to exist in Scotland. They have two stories, a ground-level door and a winding stone staircase on the inside. They were built without mortar by dry shaped stones. Some have underground chambers. Engineers who have studied them are intrigued by the original builders understanding of stress and force.

The Irish Archaeology website says that research and projects have uncovered the greatest number of **Viking graves** outside of Scandinavia in the Dublin area. Warriors were buried with swords, knives, shields, and women with combs and brooches. Dublin was home to a large Viking *longphort*, a defended base used to raid the surrounding country.

Newgrange is a Stone Age Passage Tomb in Boyne Valley Ireland. It was built around 3,200 BC, which makes it older than the Pyramids of Egypt. The base is circled by 97 large kerbstones. These very large graywacke (coarse sandstone) rocks came from at least twelve miles away. The stones are decorated with megalithic art and are said to mark the boundary between the living and the dead. The large chamber and passage are illuminated on the Winter Solstice. It keeps perfect time. Newgrange is one of 90 World Heritage monuments built along the River Boyne. Two other large passage tombs in the region are *Knowth* and *Dowth*.

The most haunted mansion in Ireland is **Loftus Hall**, a large century country house in Wexford County, Ireland, located in an area that dates back to Viking landings in the 12th century and is known as “Where Ireland was lost and won.” The house holds tales of ghost and Satanism. The owners say about the house, “There’s always the feeling that you are not alone in Loftus Hall.”

The Smithsonian reports that in 1836, on Arthur’s Hill (an extinct volcano, also called Arthur’s seat, located above Edinburgh), three Scottish boys discovered a cache of miniature coffins, dubbed “**The Fairy Coffins**.” There were seventeen wooden coffins, three-four inches long, containing wooden figures dressed in cotton clothes from head to foot. The remaining figures now are in the National Museum of Scotland.

One of the earliest stone castles in Scotland is **Yester Castle**, built sometime before A.D. 1267 by Sir Hugo de Giffard. It is one of the most haunted sites in Scotland. Beneath its ruins lie a vaulted chamber known as the **Goblin Ha’**. There are many legends connecting the castle to evil and the occult. For example, locals claim staircase can take one from the vault even deeper to a well, which locals thought led to Hell. There is a hotel in Gifford with the name, Goblin Ha’.

In Galway there is an 11-acre garden known as **Brigit’s Celtic Garden**. Known as one of the most spectacular gardens in Ireland, it is

themed on the Celtic Seasonal Festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltaine, and Lughnasa. Atlas Obscura says it features a Celtic nature trail, Celtic writings and ogham trees, a children's discovery trail, a ring fairy fort, a Neolithic roundhouse, the largest Celtic calendar sundial in Ireland.

Near St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh and on the street of the Royal Mile is a mosaic heart that marks the site where Old Tolbooth, Scotland's most brutal and notorious prison, once was entered. For many the heart marked a point of no return. It also is a place of execution. The mosaic is traditionally a place Scots spit on. Sir Walter Scott refers to Old Tolbooth in his novel, ***The Heart of Midlothian***.

Near Edinburgh Castle are the **ruins of Holyrood Abbey**. Construction began in the reign of King David and completed in the early 13th century. Through the years it was used as a royal residence and meeting place for the Parliament of Scotland. The invading English army gave the structure a thrashing in the War of the Rough Wooing. Supposedly, the ruins served as inspiration for Mendelson's *Scottish Symphony*.

According to Lily Seafield in her book of *Scottish Ghosts*, there are **different kinds of ghosts** one may encounter in Scotland. A few of these are the Glaistigs, a female ghost; the Green Ladies, a mischievous ghost who appears dressed in green; the Weeping Washerwomen, like the banshee who is a sign of coming death; animals like the Black Dog of Tiree; and the ghosts of soldiers who died in battle.

The Scots had an obsessive interest in **the devil**. They referred to Satan as the Deil, Auld Hornie, Mahoun, Auld Clootie, and Auld Hangie. Accusations of a relationship with the devil was often a death sentence and a convenient way to get rid of one's enemies.

Beneath the Royal Mile in Edinburgh lies **Mary King's Close**. A close is an alleyway. There are many of them beneath the Royal Mile in the crowded old town of Edinburgh that the present city was built over. Buildings reached as high as eight stories, with the rich living at the top. Mary King's Close may be the most famous and most haunted.

Guided tours by historical reenactors relate the history, the residents, the ghosts, the tales of murder, and how the plague once raged here.

A famous ghost of Mary King's Close is **Little Annie**. The legend says that her parents died during the plague and she was left alone to die in the close. Visitors who pass her room in the close have left dolls, toys, and jewelry for her. Other witnesses have sighted ghosts, specters, and heard strange noises. Here is a poem by the author describing the close and an encounter with Little Annie:

In Old Town Edinburg,
Beneath the Royal Mile,
I walked through Mary King's Close,
To explore it for a while.

Once lined with houses,
Eight stories high.
Sealed off in days of plague,
The residents left to die.

Once a haunt of criminals,
Now a haunt of ghosts,
Grave robbers like Burke and Ware,
These were feared the most.

I heard footsteps behind me,
And the rustle of a dress,
A lady in black darted by
Fading in the darkness,

We came to where wee Annie lived,
I've never seen a sadder room,
Visitors had left dolls and toys,
To brighten Annie's gloom.

Her family left her there to die,
When the plague touched her face,
She waited for death in the dark alone,
In that room's tiny space.

As I walked on, I felt a chill,
And a tug on my coat,
A little hand slipped into mine,
I felt a lump in my throat.

She whispered, "Annie's my name,
Please don't leave me alone,
The little hand slipped from mine,
And I finished the tour alone.

I don't know if I'll ever return,
But I know I'll never forget,
The day a little ghost held my hand,
The memory haunts me yet.

According to *Atlas Obscura*, **Christ Church Cathedral** in Dublin is known for a couple of **oddities**. Reportedly, in the mysterious crypt there are stocks once used to punish criminals. Then there are the mummified bodies of a cat and rat. The church says the cat chased the rat into an organ pipe and were stuck. James Joyce alludes to them in *Finnegan's Wake*.

In the National Museum of Scotland and in other Scottish museums as well as museums in Ireland and Great Britain, numerous discovered **coin caches** are on display. The ages of the buried treasures range from 4,000 B.C. till 17th century. One Scottish treasure hoard is a red clay pot that held 1,295 silver Roman coins discovered in 1933.

Buried Treasure Hoards have been found in Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, Great Britain, and Wales. The Romans and Vikings seem to like to bury their loot or personal wealth. Some treasures were buried with the intent of retrieval, others were buried in graves. The hoards included gold, silver, copper, and bronze coins as well as jewelry, utensils, armor and weapons. Some treasure hoards are found by accident, but many were and are found with metal detectors.

The **Grave of John Knox** is near Saint Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. *Atlas Obscura* says that his grave was paved over in a parking lot and a plague in parking space number 23 marks the location of his grave. The plaque above

the spot says: THE ABOVE STONE MARKS THE APPROXIMATE SITE OF THE BURIAL IN ST. GILES GRAVEYARD OF JOHN KNOX THE GREAT SCOTTISH DIVINE WHO DIED 24 NOVEMBER 1572.

The 16th century **Magdalen Chapel** in Edinburgh has the only stained-glass windows that survived the Scottish Reformation intact. For the Catholics, Mary of Guise used it as a place for academic lectures. For later Protestants it was a place for Protestants to be dressed for burial.

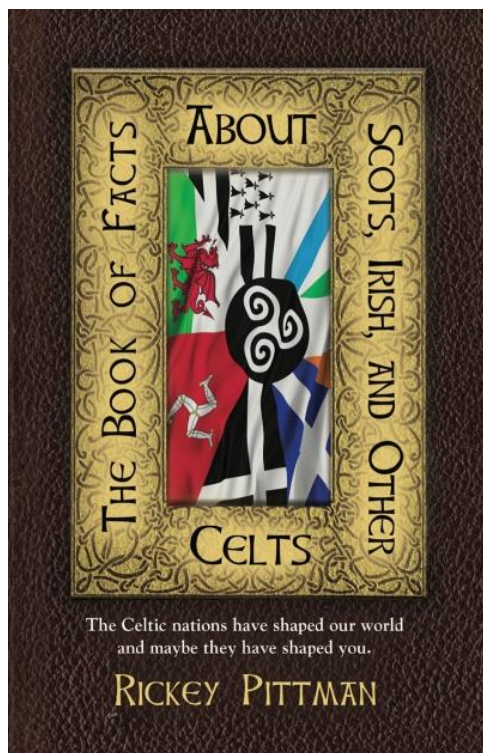
Family-owned **Rosslyn Chapel** is a church of legends. It also served as the inspiration for the Da Vinci Code (movie and novel). Author Dan Brown called it the most mysterious and magical chapel on earth. Its Gothic architecture and intricate, ornate carvings are outstanding.

When one thinks of the music of angels, one usually thinks of harps and trumpets. Yet, *Atlas Obscura* says that in the Thistle Chapel of St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh as intricately carved woodwork and stone shows three **angels playing bagpipes**. The chapel serves as home to the Order of the Thistle, Scotland's chivalric order. The order has only 16 members appointed by the Queen and new members are only initiated when a current member died. The chapel is decorated with knights' coat of arms, crests of the living members, intricate carvings of animals and flowers carved into the beams and high ceilings, including a pelican, an old Roman symbol for Christianity. There's an Angels with Bagpipes Restaurant just across the street from the cathedral.

Atlas Obscura has an article about the **Kinnitty Pyramid** in Birr, Ireland. It served as the burial place for six members of the Bernard family. The Bernards were the wealthy owners of nearby Castle Kinnitty (Castle Bernard). It is smaller than the pyramid in Giza, but it is a made-to-scale replica of the Great Pyramid of Giza. It took four years to complete and was finished in 1834. The first Bernard to be buried in it was 24-year-old Margaret Bernard, who died after being bitten by a rabid dog.

The **Mound of Hostages** is an eerie, ancient passage tomb in Ireland, that resembles the Newgrange tomb in form. The decorated passage into the tomb is only illuminated by the sun on two days: October 31 and Feb. 1. There are three compartments inside. The mound was used for burial and so far, a few hundred bodies have been found there along with grave goods. Most of the dead were cremated.

In Edinburgh, Glasgow, and perhaps in other cities in Scotland, it was once common to see **Police Boxes**. These were phone booths used by the police on their beats to stay in touch with their station and allowed the public to contact the police.



The Book of Facts for the Scots, Irish, and other Celts is certainly a book that will educate and inspire anyone who has Celtic ancestry or wishes to increase their knowledge of the Scottish, Cornish, Irish and Welsh cultures and histories.

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