

# Local History

## A Potted History of Dunfermline

Did you know that Dunfermline was the ancient Capital of Scotland from the reign of King Malcom III (1031 – 1093)?

Originally known as “Dunfermalitane” in Pictish times (The Middle Ages from years 500-1000), the modern spelling of Dunfermline is derived from “Dun” (fortified hill), “Fieram” (bent or crooked) and “Lin” (a cascade or pool).

It is thought this is a reference to a small stream which crooks and drops over a 15 foot cascade to the Ferm Burn. This is found at Tower Hill, a stone’s throw from the current Dunfermline Abbey, and the location of ‘Malcolm’s Tower’ – a scheduled monument from which only the foundations remain.



This was once the location of an impregnable fortress sighted on a highly defensible peninsular outcrop of rock above a deep ravine. This almost certainly explains Dunfermline’s motto *Esto rupes inaccessa* (Be an inaccessible rock).

The Dunfermline Coat of Arms (below) depicts both the tower and the motto;



Dunfermline Abbey is built on the remains of a great Benedictine abbey founded by Queen Margaret, wife of King Malcolm III, in the 11th century. Dunfermline Abbey is also the resting place of the remains of King Robert the Bruce (1274 – 1329), notably minus his heart, and whose name can be seen prominently carved into the main tower of the Abbey (see opp.)

Dunfermline maintained a Royal presence until 1603 when the ‘Union of the Crowns’ caused King James VI (1566 – 1625) to move his court to London. James then became the first Stuart king of England, creating the kingdom of Great Britain.

*Illustrations courtesy of:*

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