There are no written accounts of pre-Christian Dál Riata, the earliest records coming from the chroniclers **of** [**Iona**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iona) and Irish monasteries. [Adomnán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adomn%C3%A1n)'s *Life of St* [*Columba*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columba) implies a Christian Dál Riata.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-18) Whether this is true cannot be known. The figure of Columba looms large in any history of Christianity in Dál Riata. Adomnán's *Life*, however useful as a record, was not intended to serve as history, but as [hagiography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagiography). We are fortunate that the writing of saints' lives in Adomnán's day had not reached the stylised formulas of the [High Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Middle_Ages), so that the *Life* contains a great deal of historically valuable information. It is also a vital linguistic source indicating the distribution of Gaelic and P-Celtic placenames in northern Scotland by the end of the 7th century. It famously notes Columba's need for a translator when conversing with an individual on Skye.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-19) This evidence of a non-Gaelic language is supported by a sprinkling of P-Celtic placenames on the remote mainland opposite the island.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-20)

Columba's founding Iona within the bounds of Dál Riata ensured that the kingdom would be of great importance in the spread of Christianity in northern Britain, not only to Pictland, but also to Northumbria, via [Lindisfarne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne), to [Mercia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercia), and beyond. Although the monastery of Iona belonged to the [Cenél Conaill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cen%C3%A9l_Conaill) of the Northern Uí Néill, and not to Dál Riata, it had close ties to the Cenél nGabráin, ties which may make the annals less than entirely impartial.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-21)

If Iona was the greatest religious centre in Dál Riata, it was far from unique. [Lismore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lismore,_Scotland), in the territory of the Cenél Loairn, was sufficiently important for the death of its abbots to be recorded with some frequency. [Applecross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Applecross), probably in Pictish territory for most of the period, and [Kingarth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingarth) on Bute are also known to have been monastic sites, and many smaller sites, such as on [Eigg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eigg) and Tiree, are known from the annals.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-22) In Ireland, [Armoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armoy) was the main ecclesiastical centre in early times, associated with [Saint Patrick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Patrick) and with [Saint Olcán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Olc%C3%A1n), said to have been first bishop at Armoy. An important early centre, Armoy later declined, overshadowed by the monasteries at Movilla ([Newtownards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newtownards" \o "Newtownards)) and [Bangor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangor,_County_Down).[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-23)

As well as their primary spiritual importance, the political significance of religious centres cannot be dismissed. The prestige of being associated with the saintly founder was of no small importance. Monasteries represented a source of wealth as well as prestige. Additionally, the learning and literacy found in monasteries served as useful tools for ambitious kings.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-24)

The [illuminated manuscript](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated_manuscript) [Book of Kells](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Kells) was probably at least **begun at Iona**, although not by Columba as legend has it, as it dates from about 800. Whether it was or not**, Iona was certainly important in the formation of** [**Insular art**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insular_art), which combined Mediterranean, [Anglo-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxon_art), [Celtic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_art) and Pictish elements into a style of which the book of Kells is a late example.

For other arts, a number of sculptures remain to give **an impression of Dál Riatan work. The St. Martin's Cross on Iona is the best-preserved** [**high cross**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_cross)**,** probably inspired by Northumbrian free-standing crosses, such as the [Ruthwell Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruthwell_Cross), although a similar cross exists in Ireland ([Ahenny](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ahenny&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Ahenny (page does not exist)), [County Tipperary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_Tipperary)). The [Kildalton Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kildalton_Cross) on Islay is similar. A sculpted slab at [Ardchattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardchattan) appears to show strong Pictish influences, while the [Dupplin Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dupplin_Cross), it has been argued, shows that influences also moved in the opposite direction. Fine [Hiberno-Saxon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiberno-Saxon) metalwork such as [penannular brooches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penannular_brooches) is believed to have been created at Dunadd.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-25)

In addition to the monastic sites, a considerable number of churches are attested, not only from archaeological evidence, but also from the evidence of place-names. The element "kil", from Gaelic *cill*, can be shown in many cases to be associated with early churches, such as at Kilmartin by Dunadd.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A1l_Riata#cite_note-26)

*history, celtic*]   
[ dahl-ree-ahda ]

There are two Dalriadas: that of northwest Ireland, and that of western Scotland.

Dalridia is the Gaelic kingdom that, at least from the 5th century AD, extended on both sides of the North Channel and composed the northern part of the present County Antrim, Northern Ireland, and part of the Inner Hebrides and Argyll, in Scotland.

In earlier times, Argyll had received extensive immigration from the Irish of Northern Ireland (known as "Scoti"), and had become an Irish (i.e., "Scottish") area. In the latter half of the 5th century, the ruling family of Irish Dalriada crossed into Scottish Dalriada and made Dunadd and Dunolly its chief strongholds. Irish Dalriada gradually declined; and after the Viking invasions early in the 9th century, it lost all political identity.

The political history of the Dalriada in Britain is traced from the time of Fergus Mor (d. 501), who moved the seat of the royal dynasty of Dalriada  
from Ireland to northern Britain. Scottish Dalriada was confined to the western coast of modern Scotland, including Arran, Jura, Islay, Mull, and  
numerous other smaller islands, with its seat at Dunadd in Argyll. From 574 to 606/8, Dalriada was ruled by one of its most dynamic and successful kings, **Aedan mac Gabran**.

Despite heavy onslaughts from the Picts, the Dalriada of the Scottish mainland continued to expand. In the mid-9th century its king Kenneth I MacAlpin brought the Picts permanently under Dalriadic rule, and thereafter the whole country was known as Scotland.

Knowledge of the early Scottish kings, until Malcolm II, is primarily legendary.

**Kenneth 1**

Also called KENNETH MACALPIN (d. c. 858, Forteviot, Scot.).

MacAlpin was considered the first king of the united Scots of **Dalriada** and the Picts, and so of Scotland north of a line between the Forth and Clyde rivers. Ancient Gaelic-speaking people of northern Ireland who settled in Scotland sometime in the 5th century AD. Originally (until the 10th  
century) "Scotia" denoted Ireland, and the inhabitants of Scotia were Scotti.

The area of Argyll and Bute, where the migrant Scots settled, became known as the **kingdom of Dalriada**, the counterpart to Dalriada in Ireland.

St. Columba inaugurated Christianity among them and helped raise Aidan to the kingship of Scottish Dalriada in 574. The Scots then expanded eastward into what came to be known as the Forest of Atholl and Strath Earn (valley of the River Earn) and northward into the area of Elgin. The union of the lands of modern Scotland began in 843, when Kenneth I MacAlpin, king of the Scots (Dalriada), became also king of the Picts and, within a few years, joined "Pict-land" to "Scot-land" to form the kingdom of Alba.

By 1034, by inheritance and warfare, the Scots had secured hegemony over not only Alba but also Lothian, Cumbria, and Strathclyde--roughly the  
territory of modern mainland Scotland. In 1305 the kingdom was divided into Scotland, Lothian, and Galloway; in the 14th century Scotland came  
to be the name for the whole land, and all its inhabitants were called Scots, whatever their origin.

Little is known about his father Alpin, though tradition credits him with a victory over the Picts who killed him three months later, displaying his  
severed head at their camp. (c.834). Kenneth succeeded him in Dalriada and ruled in Pictavia also, ruling for 16 years. This period is obscure but  
the gradual union of the two kingdoms from 843 is no doubt due to much intermarriage. By the Pictish marriage custom, inheritance passed  
through the female. Nevertheless, Kenneth probably made some conquests among the eastern Picts and possibly invaded Lothian and burned  
Dunbar and Melrose. After attacks on Iona by Vikings he removed relics of St. Columba, probably in 849 or 850, to Dunkeld, which became the  
headquarters of the Scottish Columban church. He died at Forteviot, not far from Scone in Pictish territory, and was buried on the island of Iona.