



Scottish Gold

Neil D. L. Clark, Alison Sheridan, Donal Bateson

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Gold has been an important part of Scottish heritage for millennia and a new mine will shortly open in Tyndrum. Leisure panners can still be seen at the popular 'gold' resorts of Wanlockhead and Kildonan. Extensive mining took place during the reigns of James the IV and V in parts of the Leadhills, where nuggets weighing close to 1kg were said to have been found and converted into coinage or repairs to the royal regalia. Mining in the Leadhills for gold ceased during the reign of James VI, in the 1620s, and have only been worked on a small scale since. Gold fever was rife in Victorian Britain with stories glamorising the rags to riches of the Californian gold rush of the late 1840s and the Australian Ballarat discoveries of the early 1850s. Many thousands of Scots left to find their fortune, some returning successful and others less so. Scotland was not a rich country in the 1850s. With the potato famine of the 1840s, cholera outbreaks and the Highland clearances, it is not surprising that the first mention of gold being discovered in Scotland generated a rush to the hills in Fife (1852) and then in Sutherland (1869). In February 2014, the Hunterian at the University of Glasgow will be holding an exhibition of gold in Scotland. Amongst the treasures on display will be the King's Gold Cup from the Leith races of 1751, Queen Victoria's gold collar of the Order of the Thistle, 'cloth of gold' from the tomb of Robert the Bruce, Bronze and Iron Age gold torcs (especially the hoard from Law Farm, Morayshire), a multitude of Scottish gold coins made using Scottish gold, modern creations by Scottish goldsmith Graham Stewart, and ten large nuggets found from Scottish rivers. This is the first comprehensive look at the use of gold in Scotland from prehistoric times to the present day. It guides the reader through the natural history of gold to how we have used gold in the past and use it now in the present, as well as looking at the history of gold use in Scotland from the earliest recorded discovery of gold in Scotland in 1245 and the first use of gold coinage in Scotland to pay a king's ransom in about 1357, to the Darien disaster of the late 1600s and beyond, this book contains many remarkable snippets that are not easily obtained from other sources.

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