

Suibne mac Cináeda

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Suibne mac Cináeda (died 1034),^[2] also known as **Suibne mac Cinaeda**,^[3] **Suibne mac Cinaedh**,^[4] and **Suibhne mac Cináeda**,^[5]^[note 1] was an eleventh-century ruler of the *Gall Gaidheil*, a population of mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic ethnicity. There is little known of Suibne, as he is only attested in three sources that record the year of his death. He seems to have ruled in a region where *Gall Gaidheil* are known to have dwelt: either the Hebrides, the Firth of Clyde region, or somewhere along the south-western coast of Scotland from the firth southwards into Galloway.

Suibne's patronym, meaning "son of *Cináed*", could be evidence that he was a brother of the reigning Máel Coluim mac Cináeda, King of Scotland, and thus a member of the royal Alpinid dynasty. Suibne's career appears to have coincided with an expansion of the *Gall Gaidheil* along the south-west coast of what is today Scotland. This extension of power may have partially contributed to the destruction of the Kingdom of Strathclyde, an embattled realm which then faced aggressions from Dublin Vikings, Northumbrians, and Scots as well. The circumstances of Suibne's death are unknown, although one possibility could be that he was caught up in the vicious dynastic-strife endured by the Alpinids.

Suibne mac Cináeda

King of the Gall Gaidheil



Suibne's name as it appears on folio 16v of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 488 (the *Annals of Tigernach*).^[1]

Died	1034
Dynasty	possibly Alpinid dynasty
Father	possibly Cináed mac Maíl Choluim

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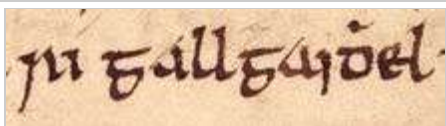
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Attestation

Suibne's death is recorded in 1034 by the *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annals of Tigernach*, and the *Annals of Loch Cé*. These three sources accord him the title "*ri Gall-Gaidhel*", "*ri Gall-Gáedel*", and "*ri Gall Goeidil*" respectively,^[9] a style which could be evidence that Suibne ruled in either the Isles, Galloway, or somewhere along the south-western coast of Scotland north of the Solway Firth.^[10] In fact, little is certain of Suibne, as he is not attested by any other historical source.^[11]

The Gaelic *Gaidheal* (plural *Gaidheil*; and its variations) is primarily a linguistic term referring to speakers of Gaelic.^[12] The Gaelic term *Gall Gaidheil* (and its variations), literally meaning "Stranger-*Gaidheil*", first appears on record in the mid-ninth century. At this period in time, the term *Gall* (plural *Gaill*) referred to Scandinavians, which indicates that *Gall Gaidheil* should be taken to mean "Scandinavian-*Gaidheil*".^[13] The term appears to have been applied to a population of mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic ethnicity in the Hebrides, perhaps within the former kingdom of Dál Riata. The leader of the *Gall Gaidheil* in the mid part of the century appears to have been a certain Caittil Find (possibly identical to Ketill Flatnefr), a man who may have been seated in the Hebrides.^[14] If the little that is known of Caittil and his connection with the *Gall Gaidheil* is correct, it could be evidence that Suibne was a Hebridean chieftain as well.^[15]

The Scottish place name *Galloway*, rendered in modern Gaelic *Gall-Ghaidhealaibh*,^[17] is derived from the Gaelic *i nGall Gaidhealaib* ("amongst the *Gall Gaidheil*").^[18] The thirteenth-century *Orkneyinga saga* refers to Galloway in Old Norse as *Gaddgeðlar*, a name clearly derived from *Gall Gaidheil*.^[19] The region was certainly associated with the *Gall Gaidheil* earlier in



Suibne's title as it appears on folio 39r of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 489 (the *Annals of Ulster*).^[16]

the previous century.^[20] Specifically, two members of the region's ruling family—Roland fitz Uhtred (died 1200) and Alan fitz Roland (died 1234)—are styled by the *Annals of Ulster* as "*ri Gall Gaidheil*" ("King of the *Gall Gaidheil*") like Suibne himself.^[21] Although this title could suggest some sort of connection between Suibne and Galloway, there is no evidence of any familial link between him and

the said later rulers.^[22] In fact, the original territory of the *Gall Gaidheil* appears to have been much more expansive than that of Galloway. For example, there is evidence to suggest that the entire region south-west of Clydesdale and Teviotdale made up the lands of the *Gall Gaidheil*.^[23] Furthermore, *Féilire Óengusso Céli Dé* and the *Martyrology of Tallaght* reveal that Bute, an island of the Firth of Clyde, was encompassed within this wide-ranging *Gall Gaidheil* territory as well.^[24]

Context

If Suibne ruled in Galloway, the notices of his death would be the first known instances of the term *Gall Gaidheil* in reference to the region.^[26] It would mean that he was a precursor to the aforesaid similarly-styled Gallovidian rulers.^[27] A more contemporary figure, Echmarcach mac Ragnaill, King of Dublin and the Isles (died 1064/1065), may well have ruled in Galloway as well, if the style "*rex Innarenn*", accorded to him by Marianus Scottus (died 1082),^[28] means "King of the Rhinns",^[29] as opposed to "King of the Isles".^[30] Echmarcach was one of several northern kings who convened with, and possibly submitted to, Cnut, King of England in 1031.^[31] If Suibne and Echmarcach were indeed associated with Galloway, Echmarcach's dealings with the English king—only a few years before the Suibne's death—could suggest that Echmarcach and Suibne were rivals within the region.^[32] On the other hand, the aforesaid evidence concerning Bute could indicate that the original territory of the *Gall Gaidheil* lay within the Firth of Clyde region and nearby Cowal. If so, the apparent record of Echmarcach ruling in the Rhinns could reveal that much of what came to be known as Galloway was originally separate from the *Gall Gaidheil* territory that apparently stretched southwards from the said firth, along the coast down to Carrick. This could mean that the Rhinns was not part of the *Gall Gaidheil* territory during Suibne's *floruit*, and only came to be incorporated into these lands at a later date, perhaps in the twelfth century.^[33]



The name of Amlaíb mac Sitriuc, a nearby contemporary of Suibne, as it appears on folio 16v of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 488.^[34]

Another figure who may have held power in Galloway at about the time of Suibne's *floruit* was a particular son of Sitriuc mac Amlaíb, King of Dublin (died 1042).^[35] According to *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*, a son of Sitriuc named Amlaíb was the grandfather of Gruffudd ap Cynan, King of Gwynedd (died 1137). If this source is to be believed, Amlaíb held royal power in the Rhinns and Galloway (amongst other places).^[36]^[note 2] In fact, Sitriuc had two sons named Amlaíb,^[38] and it is not certain if either ruled as a king.^[39] One of these like-named men died in 1013;^[40] whilst the other died in 1034.^[41] Either man could have been Ragnail's father.^[42] If *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* refers to the latter, this source could be evidence that this Amlaíb was a contemporary of Echmarcach and Suibne, and could indicate that

he held power in Galloway and the Isles at some point between 1028 (the year his father set out upon a pilgrimage) and 1034 (the year of his death).^[43]

The patronym borne by Suibne is the same as that of the reigning Máel Coluim mac Cináeda, King of Scotland (died 1034). In fact, this patronym could be evidence that he and Máel Coluim were brothers,^[45] and that Suibne had been placed upon the throne in a region occupied by *Gall Gaidheil*.^[46]^[note 3] In support of such an act is the fact that the *Prophecy of Berchan* associates Máel Coluim with Islay,^[51] and the claim by Ailred, Abbot of Rievaulx (died 1167) that Gallovidians were vassals of Máel Coluim's eventual successor Máel Coluim mac Donnchada, King of Scotland (died 1093).^[52] Máel Coluim certainly extended Scottish royal authority southwards into Lothian,^[53] and Strathclyde.^[54] If he had indeed managed to insert a brother

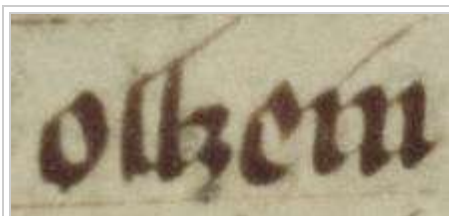


Locations relating to the life and times of Suibne.



The name of Echmarcach mac Ragnaill, Suibne's contemporary and possible rival, as it appears on folio 17r of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 488.^[25]

into Galloway it could suggest that he possessed overlordship there as well, perhaps after his annexation of the former kingdom of Strathclyde.^[55] The notices of Suibne's demise, therefore, could be the first record of Scottish control of regions south-west of the River Clyde.^[56]



Possibly the name of Owain Foel, a near contemporary of Suibne in Strathclyde, as it appears on folio 60r of Oxford Jesus College MS 111 (the *Red Book of Hergest*).^[57]^[note 4]

The last ruling member of the Strathclyde dynasty was Owain Foel (fl. 1018), a man who lent military assistance to Máel Coluim against the Northumbrians in 1018.^[59] It is

possible that, following this man's death soon after 1018, Máel Coluim seized the kingship for himself.^[60] There is also reason to suspect that Suibne's reign was somehow connected to the demise of Owain's kingdom.^[61] The uncertainty surrounding the exact extent of the eleventh century *Gall Gaidheil*, coupled with the absence of any contemporaneous record of the Strathclyde kingship, could indicate that portions of the latter realm had fallen prey to the expansion of the *Gall Gaidheil*.^[62] One possibility is that, Suibne, as King of the *Gall Gaidheil*, was personally responsible for the conquest of western maritime region of this British

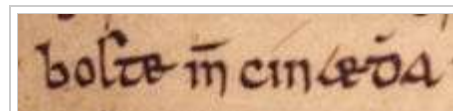
kingdom.^[63] In fact, the *Annals of Tigernach* record a ravaging inflicted upon Britons in 1030 by both the *Gaill* of Dublin and the English.^[64] Since this violent episode receives no corroboration from English and Welsh sources, such as *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and *Annales Cambriae*, it is possible that the recorded attack relates to Strathclyde Britons rather than the Welsh.^[65]^[note 5] If Strathclyde was not independently conquered by the *Gall Gaidheil*, and Suibne and Máel Coluim were indeed brothers, it is conceivable that Máel Coluim seized upon the vacated British kingship and installed Suibne as king. Such a move may explain the Scots' failure to immediately exploit their aforesaid victory over the Northumbrians, and could indicate that their resources were instead projected against the vulnerable Strathclyde Britons.^[68] The aforesaid claim by *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*—that Sitriuc's son held power in the Rhinns amongst other regions—could be further evidence that the Strathclyde Britons suffered from attacks by the Dubliners. Such incursions could well have been coordinated with the *Gall Gaidheil*.^[69]

Echmarcach's aforesaid meeting with Cnut included two other kings: Máel Coluim and the Moravian ruler, Mac Bethad mac Findlaích (died 1057).^[70] Although Máel Coluim and Mac Bethad appear to have been related,^[71] the nature of the relationship between Máel Coluim and Echmarcach is uncertain. If Suibne was indeed a brother of the Scottish king, and ruled in Galloway at his behest, it could be evidence that Echmarcach was another client-king of Máel Coluim.^[72] In fact, the agreement with Cnut could indicate that Máel Coluim enjoyed overlordship over Mac Bethad and Echmarcach. If so, and if Máel Coluim indeed held power in the southern Hebrides as the *Prophecy of Berchan* seems to suggest, Echmarcach's realm may have encompassed Mann, the Rhinns, and only the Hebridean islands north of the Ardnamurchan peninsula.^[73] If Suibne and Máel Coluim were indeed brothers, and the former owed his authority amongst the *Gall Gaidheil* to the power of the Scottish Crown, it is even possible that the Scots expelled Echmarcach from the Isles at some point between the concord with Cnut and Suibne's death as king.^[74]

Another possibility dependant upon kinship between Máel Coluim and Suibne concerns the fact that both men died within the same year.^[76] The former was the final members of the Alpinid dynasty to rule the Kingdom of Scotland,^[77] and was succeeded by his maternal-grandson, Donnchad ua Maíl Choluim (died 1040).^[78] In fact, in the later stages of his career, Máel Coluim seems to have taken steps to remove potential threats to the royal succession, and in this context appears to have orchestrated the assassination of the son or grandson of a certain Boite mac Cináeda in 1033.^[79] Not only is the exact identity of this man uncertain—as he could have been either a brother or cousin of Máel Coluim^[80]^[note 6]—but Máel Coluim himself died under obscure circumstances.^[82] If Máel Coluim and Suibne were indeed brothers, the deaths of both men within the same year could well be connected, and could be evidence of conflict between the kings, with Suibne himself dying in battle against Máel Coluim.^[83] If Suibne indeed had no connection with the later rulers of Galloway, it is possible that his kingdom or sub-kingdom died with him.^[84]



The name of Máel Coluim mac Cináeda, the reigning King of Scotland and possible brother of Suibne, as it appears on folio 16v of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 488.^[44]



The name of Boite mac Cináeda, a man who may have been a brother of Suibne, as it appears on folio 39r of Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B 489.^[75]

Notes

1. Other names accorded to Suibne include *Suibhne Mac Cínaedha*,^[6] *Sweeney mac Kenneth*,^[7] and *Suibhne mac Kenneth*.^[8]
2. The text makes a clear distinction between the Rhinns and Galloway, treating them as separate territories.^[37]
3. Another possibility is that Suibne's patronym may point to kinship with Cináed mac Duib, King of Scotland (died 1005).^[47] The name *Suibne* / *Suibhne* was borne by the progenitor of the mediaeval Scottish (later Irish) Clann Suibhne, but this man—Suibhne mac Duinshléibhe—seems to have been a much later figure.^[48] Although pedigrees concerning the Scottish Clann Domhnaill note an apparent eleventh-century ancestor with the name, the names that these sources give for this particular man's father are nothing like the personal name *Cináed*.^[49] Potential evidence against the possibility that Suibne was a member of the Scottish royal family is the fact that no other member of this family—the Alpinid dynasty—is known to have borne the personal name *Suibne*.^[50]
4. This source reports the death of a certain Owain ap Dyfnwal in 1015. Whilst this death-notice could refer to Owain Foel himself,^[57] another possibility is that it refers to a royal predecessor of him, perhaps an uncle.^[58]
5. Although *Historia Regum Anglorum* states that Eadwulf, Earl of Northumbria (died 1041) attacked the Britons in 1038, it is not clear where these Britons were located. It is possible that these particular people were under *Gall Gaidheil* overlordship.^[66] The attack itself may have been the subject of a particular *primscél* ("chief tale")—*Argain Sratha Cluada*—that is mentioned by the *Book of Leinster*.^[67]
6. For example, he could have been a son of Cináed mac Duib, King of Scotland (died 1005), Máel Coluim's first cousin.^[81]

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2. Bolton (2009); Moody; Martin; Byrne (2005).
3. Downham (2007); Broun (2004b); Woolf (2004); MacQueen (2003).
4. Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005); Oram (2000); Oram (1988).
5. Hudson (2005); Hudson (1994).
6. Ó Murchú (1992).
7. Bolton (2009).
8. Duncan (1996).
9. Charles-Edwards (2013) p. 573; *The Annals of Ulster* (2012) § 1034.10; *The Annals of Tigernach* (2010) § 1034.3; Bolton (2009) p. 142; Jennings; Kruse (2009) p. 125; *Annals of Loch Cé* (2008) § 1034.8; *The Annals of Ulster* (2008) § 1034.10; Downham (2007) p. 171; Woolf (2007) p. 253; *Annals of Loch Cé* (2005) § 1034.8; *Annals of Tigernach* (2005) § 1034.3; Hudson (2005) p. 133; Broun (2004b) p. 136; MacQueen (2003) p. 69 n. 8; Oram (2000) p. 7; Hudson (1994) p. 117; Ó Murchú (1992) p. 36; Oram (1988) p. 7; Kapelle (1979) pp. 247–248 n. 39; Anderson (1922) p. 578, 578 n. 1.
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11. Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) p. 96; Oram (2000) p. 7; Oram (1988) pp. 7–8.
12. Jennings, A (1996) p. 68.
13. Jennings; Kruse (2009) pp. 123–124, 144; Woolf (2007) p. 100 n. 24; Jennings, A (1996) p. 66.
14. Jennings; Kruse (2009); Jennings, A (1996) pp. 66–67.
15. Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) p. 96; Oram (2000) p. 7.
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18. Jennings, AP (2001).
19. Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) p. 96; Oram (2000) p. 8.
20. Charles-Edwards (2013) p. 573; Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) p. 96; Oram (2000) p. 7.
21. *The Annals of Ulster* (2012) § 1200.6; *The Annals of Ulster* (2008) § 1200.6; *Annala Uladh...* (2005) § 1234.1; Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) pp. 96–97; *Annala Uladh...* (2003) § 1234.1; Jennings, AP (2001); Oram (2000) p. 7; Oram (1988) pp. 7–8.
22. Oram (1988) p. 7.
23. Charles-Edwards (2013) p. 574.
24. Charles-Edwards (2013) pp. 574–575; Jennings; Kruse (2009) p. 133; Jennings, AP (2001); Jennings, A (1996) p. 68; Stokes (1905) pp. 175, 184–185.
25. *The Annals of Tigernach* (2010) § 1036.8; *Annals of Tigernach* (2005) § 1036.8; *Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B. 488* (n.d.).
26. Jennings, AP (2001).
27. Clarkson (2010) p. 191.
28. Charles-Edwards (2013) p. 573; Flanagan (2010) p. 231 n. 196; Downham (2007) p. 171; Duffy (2006) pp. 56–57; Forte; Oram; Pedersen (2005) p. 229; Hudson (2005) pp. 129, 138; Duffy (2002) pp. 53–54; Etchingham (2001) p. 160; Oram (2000) p. 17; Duffy (1992) pp. 98–99; Anderson (1922) pp. 590–592 n. 2; Waitz (1844) p. 559.
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- Duffy (1992) pp. 98–99.
30. Flanagan (2010) p. 231 n. 196; Duffy (2006) pp. 56–57.
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 32. Downham (2007) p. 171.
 33. Charles-Edwards (2013) pp. 573–575.
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 36. Williams (2012) pp. 22, 62–63; Downham (2007) p. 198 n. 125; Etchingham (2001) pp. 158–159; Oram (2000) p. 16; Duffy (1992) p. 99; Evans (1990) pp. 23–24, 53–55; Jones (1910) pp. 102–105.
 37. Etchingham (2001) p. 160.
 38. Hudson (2005) p. 83 fig. 3; Etchingham (2001) pp. 158 n. 35; Thornton (1996) p. 88; Oram (2000) p. 16.
 39. Thornton (1996) p. 88, 88 n. 37.
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 41. Etchingham (2001) pp. 158 n. 35, 159, 187; Oram (2000) p. 16; Thornton (1996) p. 88.
 42. Hudson (2005) p. 83 fig. 3, 120–121; Etchingham (2001) p. 158 n. 35; Oram (2000) p. 16; Thornton (1996) p. 88, 88 n. 36; Bartrum (1993) p. 171; Bartrum (1966) p. 136.
 43. Downham (2007) p. 198 n. 125; Etchingham (2001) pp. 159–161.
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 45. Bolton (2009) p. 142; Hudson (2005) p. 133; Moody; Martin; Byrne (2005) p. 466 n. 1; Woolf (2004) p. 100; Hudson (1994) pp. 117–118, 158; Kapelle (1979) pp. 38–39, 40 tab 3, 41, 247–248 n. 39.
 46. Hudson (2005) p. 133; Woolf (2004) p. 100.
 47. Moody; Martin; Byrne (2005) p. 466 n. 1.
 48. Woolf (2007) pp. 253–254; Sellar (1971) p. 27.
 49. Woolf (2007) pp. 253–254; Woolf (2005) p. 3 fig. 1.
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 51. Hudson (2005) p. 133; Woolf (2007) pp. 225–226; Woolf (2004) p. 100; Hudson (1996) pp. 90, 221.
 52. Hudson (2005) p. 133; Hudson (1994) p. 158; Raine (1864) p. 178.
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 59. Edmonds (2014) pp. 209, 214; Minard; Busse (2006); Broun (2004a); Broun (2004b) pp. 134, 139 n. 117; Macquarrie (1998) pp. 6, 16–17, 18; Kapelle (1979) p. 38.
 60. Broun (2004a); Kapelle (1979) pp. 38–39.
 61. Woolf (2007) p. 254; Broun (2004b) p. 136.
 62. Woolf (2007) p. 254, 254 n. 49.
 63. Broun (2004b) p. 136.
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 67. Edmonds (2014) pp. 207–208, 208 n. 69; *Book of Leinster* (2012) §§ 24980–24985.
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 71. Bolton (2009) p. 142; Hudson (2005) p. 133.
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 75. *The Annals of Ulster* (2012) § 1033.7; *The Annals of Ulster* (2008) § 1033.7; *Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B. 489'* (n.d.).
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 80. Woolf (2009) p. 262; Woolf (2007) p. 247, 247 n. 34; Broun (2004a); Woolf (2001); Duncan (1996) p. 113, 113 n. 25; Kapelle (1979) p. 41.

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