

Who was Alexander III?

King Alexander III was King of Scotland from 1249 until 1285. His unexpected death left Scotland without any heir to the throne. Nobody knew what would happen next.

Alexander was a king who became famous for two things.

The first thing he was famous for was taking control of the Western Isles. Before Alexander, a lot of Scottish islands belonged to Norway.

In 1263 the Norwegian navy attacked Scotland at **Largs** but the Scots fought them off. Later the King of Norway sold the islands to Alexander. Orkney and Shetland still belonged to Norway, though.

The second thing Alexander is famous for is dying. His early death was a disaster for Scotland.



How did Alexander die?

Alexander and his first wife, Margaret, had three children together. Margaret died in 1275. By 1284, all three of their children had died too.

This meant there was no **heir (next in line)** to the throne to take over after Alexander died. In 1285 Alexander married again. His new wife was called Yolande.

On March 18th 1286, Alexander rode his horse to Kinghorn, Fife, to meet Yolande to celebrate her birthday. It was a dark, stormy night. Alexander never made it. The next day he was found dead on the beach with a broken neck. He had fallen from his horse.

Scotland now had no ruler. The next person in line to rule Scotland was a three-year-old girl who lived in Norway - Alexander's granddaughter, Margaret, Maid of Norway.

Alexander III Key Facts


- Alexander was born at Roxburgh in 1241
- He was only seven when he became king in 1249
- He married Margaret of England in 1251 when he was 10
- He defeated a Norwegian fleet at Largs in 1263
- He gained control of the Western Isles in 1266 at the Treaty of Perth
- He died in 1286 and was buried in Dunfermline Abbey



Kinghorn Beach – where Alexander III's body was found!

Tasks:

 Who was Margaret, Maid of Norway?

 Think, why was it a disaster that Alexander III died?

 Think, who benefitted from his death?