

The Term Scot

This term of course refers to someone from Scotland, but did it start out that way? The term Scot, Scoti, Scotti, or Scotia was used by the Romans to describe the Gaelic raiders from Ireland. The poet Egesippus describes how the Scot tremble at the news of Roman legions. Orosius, a geographer in the third century uses the term Scoti to describe the people of Hibernia.

Early Roman Ammianus Marcellinus talks of the unrelenting raids by the Scotti on Roman Britain. Scotia is said to have been the original Latin name for Hibernia (Ireland). In the seventh century “Isidore of Seville” used the term “Scotia eadem et Hibernia”, that is to say Scotland and Ireland are one and the same country “Ireland”. In the ninth century Notker le Bègue who was Charlemagne’s biographer used the term “the island of Herbernia or Scotia.” Again talking of St. Kilian, he states that St. Kilian came from Hibernia, the island of the Scots.

For many years continental writers continued to use the terms Scotia and Scot when referring to Ireland and the Irish. They designated Irish scholars by the term “Scotus”. At one time in history Ireland was called “Scotia Major” and Scotland “Scotia Minor”.

In the 11th century, Scotia was used to describe Northern Britain. The Roman Catholic church under Pope Leo X at last brought the confusion to an end by giving Scotland the exclusive right to the word Scot, Scoti, Scotti, or Scotia. But how did the Scots as we know them today become Scots? One must remember that back in the dawn of history, present day Scotland was the land of the Picts.

We must go back into the mist of time, back to a kingdom in Ireland called Dalriada which is thought to have been in Antrim (Ulster) Ireland. In the sixth century from the kingdom of Dalriada came Fergus, Mor Macerc descendent of Carbi Riada. With Fergus came his two brothers Loarn and Angus. They brought with them many followers to the west coast of present day Scotland. This first intrusion into Alba was in what is now Argyll. Their main town or fort was at Dunadd in present day Scotland. And during this time the Dalriadic Scots (Irish) were at war with their Pictish neighbors.

After a period of about 100 years the Dalriadic kingdom in Ireland and the one in Alba separated. The Dalriadic kingdom in Alba slowly became known as The land of the Scots. In the year 850 their king Cinead (Kenneth) MacAlpin completely defeated the Picts and was the Gaelic King of most of present day Scotland. Slowly the term “land of the Scots” became the Scots-land.

Remember you can be Scots by birth, Scottish by birth or descent, but not Scotch, which is wiskey.