

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF DUNKELD**

This area, with its rich natural resources, has been a settlement since ancient times. Dunkeld's position guarding one of the main passes from Lowland into Highland Scotland made it an attractive location from a strategic point of view and there is evidence of both the Romans and the Picts.

Dunkeld emerged as a centre of Christianity during the 7th Century, when Columba came over from Iona, and much work was carried out by his successors. In the 9th Century, Kenneth MacAlpin, the first King of Scots, made Dunkeld head of the Celtic Church and capital of the newly-formed nation created by the union of the Scots and the Picts. The Church grew in power and wealth and the Cathedral, started in 1325, was extremely important in ecclesiastical terms until the Reformation in the 16th Century, when it was destroyed. The Choir of the Cathedral was re-roofed in 1600 to serve as the parish church, and there was relative peace until 1689, when there was a short, but extremely violent Battle between the Jacobites and the Cameronians (a newly-raised regiment supporting William of Orange) and most of Dunkeld was burned to the ground.

The re-building was slow, but once again Dunkeld became an important centre, this time as a market town and a place of much commercial bustle, since it was here that cattle-droving roads met. There were many businesses - brewing, tanning, glove-making, candle-making and weaving. Communication and transport however, two vital elements of successful trade, were poor. It was not until the building of the bridge in 1809 that these improved. Tolls were imposed to pay for the bridge and this led to great resentment. By the time the tolls were removed, the railway had come to the area, but on the south side of the river, and so Dunkeld had begun its next decline.

The main route through Dunkeld became north-south rather than east-west and so the Cross and Cathedral Street became a backwater and fell into decay. Much of this area was ruinous by the middle of the 20th Century and it was due to the National Trust for Scotland and the Perth County Council that Dunkeld has retained much of the impression of a different age.