

SOCIAL STUDIES — SCOTTISH HISTORY · P5–P7

# Na Cùmhnantaich — The Covenanters

P5–P7

## Who were the Covenanters?

1

### The National Covenant (1638)

A document signed in Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh by thousands of Scots (and later throughout Scotland) declaring their commitment to Presbyterianism and resistance to religious innovation imposed by King Charles I.

2

### Why it mattered

Charles I had tried to impose an Anglican Prayer Book on Scotland — seen as Catholic by Presbyterians. The Covenant was defiance: Scotland's church was answerable to God alone, not to a king.

3

### The Bishops' Wars

Two wars between Scotland and England (1639, 1640) over the religious question. Scotland won both. The cost and humiliation contributed to the crisis that led to the English Civil War.

4

### The Killing Time (1680–1685)

The most intense period of persecution under Charles II and James VII. Covenanters who refused to accept Royal authority over the church were killed — hunted in the hills, shot after capture. Perhaps 18,000 were killed in total across the Covenanting period.

5

### Martyrs

Covenanting martyrs were celebrated in Scotland for generations — their graves became pilgrimage sites. The Covenanters' memorials (especially at Greyfriars) are still maintained.



6

**Resolution**

The Glorious Revolution (1688–89) restored Presbyterianism in Scotland. The Church of Scotland was established on Presbyterian lines by Act of Parliament in 1690.

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